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The iconography of Moche winged figures

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The iconography of Moche winged figures

by

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2010

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the result of several years of interest and research in ancient visual cultures, beginning in my undergraduate career and continuing to the present day. Many people and institutions have aided me in this endeavor. Dr. Steve Bourget has been a great mentor and a wonderful source of information and insight. Dr. Julia Guernsey has been so helpful and encouraging throughout the process.

During the summer of 2009 I was able to conduct research in Peru for this project. The Department of Art and Art History Summer Research Grant and the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies Tinker Summer Field Research Grant provided the necessary funding for this research program. I am also very grateful to Sra. Ulla Holmquist and Museo Larco for allowing me access to their collections as well as the curatorial information they provided.

Finally, my colleagues, friends and family have provided vital support and guidance throughout my academic career, and I would not have succeeded without them. Thank you all.

August 13, 2010

Abstract

The iconography of Moche winged figures

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The Moche fineline painting corpus contains hundreds of representations of winged figures, but these have never been analyzed as a group. This thesis is an investigation of these winged figures, focusing on iconographic methodology. I have identified and categorized representations of birds (ducks, the Falconidae family, owls, hummingbirds, vultures and condors, etc.), mammals (bats) and insects (dragonflies) in the fineline paintings. Special attention has been paid to genus and family, including the attributes and behaviors of these animals. This has yielded several important observations about how the Moche represented and linked winged figures. In the second part of this thesis I use semiotic analysis to consider winged figures as symbols rather than naturalistic representations. I also examine anthropomorphic winged figures, and analyze the interpretive possibilities and the implications of these interpretations.

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Introduction

Winged figures—a group which is comprised of birds, bats and dragonflies—are almost ubiquitous throughout the corpus of Moche art. They appear rendered naturalistically or anthropomorphically in every medium: textiles, painted ceramics, ceramic sculpture, wood sculpture, metal working and wall murals. Winged figures are interesting because they are liminal, in that they are all capable of flight—creatures of the air—but also inhabit many other places. "Liminal" is a term defined by Victor Turner, meaning "literally 'being-on-a-threshold,'…a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states and processes of getting and spending, preserving law and order, and registering structural status."[1] The species of birds, bats and dragonflies dealt with in this paper are found in every environment in the Andes: desert, coast, ocean, inland bodies of water, mountains, and rainforest. Despite their ubiquity in the corpus and in the landscape of northern Peru, little work has been done addressing winged figures as a whole, and how they can be organized into Moche art. In this thesis I will investigate the contexts and meanings of winged figures, and what this can reveal about Moche visual culture.

Historiography and Knowledge

We know more about the Moche than we do about most other ancient Andean cultures, although there is still much we don't understand. The study of Moche culture began with archaeology and continues to be anchored by it. Long term archaeological excavation and analysis has yielded most of what we comprehend about the political

[1] Turner, Victor. "Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6, no. 4 (1979): 465.

structure and economic activities of the Moche, although theories and information are constantly being updated. In addition to actual objects of visual culture, archaeologists have unearthed artifacts and remains which confirm that rituals such as human sacrifice depicted in the iconography were performed by the Moche.

Art historical methods and research are also vital in studying Moche culture. These methods have not been utilized by all Moche scholars, but are gaining more and more importance in the field. Rafael Larco Hoyle conducted the first iconographic analysis of the Moche in 1938, and Gerdt Kutscher's 1955 work on the Moche was the first to order Moche iconography according to subject and theme. Danièle Lavalée's 1970 book *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica* and Christopher Donnan's *Moche Art and Iconography* in 1976 were crucial first steps, and much of their analyses is still valid. Anne Marie Hocquenghem's *Iconografia Mochica* in 1987, Jürgen Golte's *Iconos y Narraciones* in 1994, as well as several articles by Elizabeth Benson and Jeffrey Quilter, have provided further organization and analysis. These scholars have for the most part conducted relatively straightforward identifications of different characters and animal species in Moche art. This has been an invaluable start to organizing an otherwise daunting artistic corpus. More recently scholars have focused on an actual analysis of the structure of Moche visual culture. Steve Bourget has most successfully utilized art historical methods in various publications, and has given several insights into the iconographic relationships in Moche art.

This thesis will analyze the contexts and meanings of winged figures from the standpoint of visual culture and iconography. Many scholars have discussed birds, bats

and to a lesser extent dragonflies. I have heavily relied on several Moche scholars as well as biologists throughout my analysis. This thesis would not be possible without Lavalée's work on the identification and organization of animals; Benson's *Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America* was also useful for specific identifications and associations. There are many other sources of information for winged figures, although no researcher has given them an exclusive analysis. My aim is to concentrate solely on one class of figures and produce new information about the associations and meanings that they carry.

Despite the quality of the scholarship there are still limits to our knowledge. To illustrate this, examining a vessel such as Figure 1 is appropriate. It is a stirrup-spout vessel, which is a vessel form we find in different cultures and time spans that likely served no practical function. The vessel itself is mostly white, with red paint applied around the body. The white color of the vessel could indicate that it was made from white clay, but more likely it was made from red clay while white clay was used as a slip to coat the vessel. It is stylistically dated to Phase III, which corresponds to sometime between 250 and 450 CE.[2] Like many Moche vessels, we do not know the context of where it was found. We have no information as to who made it, who commissioned it, its audience, or any of its intended uses. Almost all of the ceramic bottles that we have found archaeologically have been in tombs, so we might assume that this vessel comes from a tomb as well.

We know more about what is represented in the painted scene, known as a fineline painting. There are two main figures, probably human, being carried in litters by

[2] This dating system is far from exact, but we can usually generalize to within a few centuries.

several anthropomorphic figures. The anthropomorphic figures include two hummingbirds, two foxes and five lizards. The headdresses that the human-like figures wear, as well as the litters they are carried in, appear in other fineline painted scenes and archaeological contexts. The litters in all likelihood connote a high level of sociopolitical status, but the nature of that status is unknown to us. The anthropomorphized animals appear in hundreds of other fineline painted scenes. There are two possibilities of interpretation: these anthropomorphic figures might be the same characters shown in different actions and different vessels, or they might be a generic type. Numerous studies by scholars such as Donnan, Castillo, Bourget, Golte and Makowski hypothesize that there is a thematic structure and narrative nature of complex scenes. We can say with a relative degree of certainty that these are the same characters being represented rather than a generic type.

The fineline painting is conservatively described as "transportation of a character by litter."[3] The figures in the litter seem to be human, and are seated wearing diadems and fine tunics. They are likely rulers. The scene is associated with warfare, because several of the figures carry shields and weapons. But there are other possibilities as well. Perhaps this is a mythical or supernatural scene, and the anthropomorphic figures are gods or beings with supernatural attributes. Perhaps this is a representation of a human ritual, with people costumed as animals. Or it might be a metaphorical or allegorical representation, which was not meant to correspond to a real activity. Perhaps it is a combination of several of the above ideas, or something else entirely.

[3] Online catalogue Museo Larco, "Detalle del Registro, Descripción," Museo Larco, http://catalogomuseolarco.perucultural.org.pe/detail.asp?NumeroIngreso=4111 (Translation mine).

Almost every piece of art in the Moche corpus raises similar questions. We can identify basic things like individual figures and what species (or in some cases genus, family or order) they are. We can make associations with other scenes and correlate that with archaeological data. We can suggest the likely actions that are being depicted, and the deeper meanings and associations that the scene or figure might carry. This thesis will present suggestions such as species identifications, associations and organization of winged figures, as well as some of the meanings that scenes and individual figures carry. I will be gathering information from Moche scholars and biologists and presenting some further organizational analysis and species identification. In Chapter Two I will offer some possible explanations for what winged figures actually signify.

Sources

Donnan has identified several artists on the basis of the execution and style of different fineline paintings. Other than this we have little information on who artists were in terms of socioeconomic class, training and other relevant data. It seems likely given the quantity and quality of Moche visual culture that artists did not work in all media, and probably had specific training, perhaps in the form of apprenticeships and specialized workshops. We know even less about why the art was made. It seems likely that there was some kind of artistic class, and they created ceramics and other media for patrons. Perhaps most art was created for ritual purposes, perhaps not. Because much of the corpus has been unscientifically unearthed, we do not know the final contexts that objects had, or even the most basic information such as in which valley an object was deposited.

To narrow down the number of objects that I will be analyzing into a manageable amount, I have chosen to focus on fineline paintings and for the most part I exclude

murals, textiles and ceramic sculpture. I have done this partly out of necessity, because looking at every winged figure in every medium throughout the entire span of Moche civilization is too large of a task for an effective analysis in the space of a Masters thesis. I have also focused on fineline paintings because they seem to contain the greatest amount of information, with hundreds of actors and actions being depicted.[4]

Ceramic vessels are ultimately containers. They may not have been practically used to hold liquids, but they connoted vessels, and they were portable. Other artistic media in the Moche realm were also portable, and some could even function as containers, such as woven bags. Other media, such as textiles, metalworking and wooden sculpture, were likely used for and connoted adornment and were thus much more personal. Monumental art, notably wall murals and architecture, is non-portable and likely impersonal. While we have no indication of who would have had access to buildings and murals, on a functional level monumental art had the greatest possible audience, while personal adornments like textiles and metalworking had a much smaller possible audience, limited to whoever was in eyesight and allowed to look at the person wearing such things.

Ceramic objects stand in the middle in terms of possible audience size; their viewing status and function are also more negotiable. Ceramic pieces can be put on display in a permanent setting and be very impersonal. They also have the capacity to be exactly the opposite: intensely personal, passed around by hand and possibly used as

4 Bourget has said that the ceramics contain the majority of iconographic information for the Moche. Steve Bourget, "Los Raptores De Almas: Prácticas Funerarias En La Iconografía Mochica." In *Al Final Del Camino*, ed. Moisés Lemlij Luis Millones (Lima: Seminario Interdisciplinario de Estudios Andinos, 1996), 37.

decoration or adornment. We do not know if the Moche actually used ceramics in these ways, but the fact remains that ceramics can take on different roles and contexts, probably more than any other media the Moche created. The only other possible equivalent is textiles, which may have also been used in a variety of functions. But because textiles so rarely survive in the environment of the north coast of Peru, ceramics seem to be the best material to analyze in order to understand Moche visual culture.

Methodology

For this thesis I will be examining part of the corpus of Moche art, and I intend to contribute some new suggestions about the organization and meanings of winged figures. I will not be conducting a thorough visual analysis correlated with archaeological data for each depiction of a winged figure in the corpus. Instead, I have divided representations of birds, bats and dragonflies into groups, most often on the basis of the biological family or order. For each group I will be justifying the decision that I have made in creating the group and then analyzing it on the basis of types of scenes represented, actions performed, and associations with other figures. In some cases I will be presenting some interpretive analysis, but the focus for Chapter One will be organizing winged figures into discreet and manageable groups. In Chapter Two I will analyze images as symbols, and I will be explaining the concept of anthropomorphic winged figures and the interpretive possibilities for this class of figures.

It could be said that in gathering images of winged figures from the Moche corpus then subsequently analyzing them, I am performing the type of iconographic analysis espoused by Erwin Panofsky in his seminal work “Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art”. However, characterizing this particular

analysis and perhaps all Pre-Columbian visual analyses as iconography in the vein of Western art history is very misleading. According to Panofsky, there are three levels of this kind of interpretation: pre- iconographical description (using practical experience to identify the primary/natural subject matter), iconographical analysis (using knowledge of the literary sources to identify secondary/conventional subject matter) and iconological interpretation (using synthetic intuition to identify the intrinsic meaning or content).

In analyzing Moche art using Panofsky's methods one would need to know the objects and events that existed in Moche culture, the literary or oral sources that explained themes and concepts in Moche politics, religion and economy, and the cultural symbols and concepts of a typical Moche mindset. We have none of these things. What we do have is a large artistic corpus full of naturalistic depictions of plants, animals and humans, as well as many depictions of beings that have "supernatural" attributes. We also have archaeological resources that in some cases confirm that rituals depicted in the iconography were actually carried out.

In contrast to Panofsky's criteria for iconographical and iconological analysis, I am not using what I know about the Moche natural world, events, literary sources, societal structures or symbols to try to gain further insights and understanding in Moche visual culture. I am looking at visual culture first and trying to conduct some formal analysis (perhaps this could be classified as pre-iconographical description). However, I cannot use what is known about Moche culture to explain the motifs and relationships expressed by the art. For this analysis the next step is the opposite of Panofsky's because I am trying to gain further insights into Moche culture and societal structures from visual analysis.

What I intend to do with this thesis is present some of my findings into the organization of winged figures in visual culture. Such figures might not be the literal representations of birds, bats and insects that many scholars assume them to be, and I would like to suggest some other possible interpretations for these creatures. To accomplish this I will be using the visual corpus, as outlined above. The fineline painting corpus will be used to establish the contexts and associations that these winged figures have.

Once I have conducted my visual analysis—through looking at forms, establishing relationships and identifying some of the species and players—I will then try to ascertain some of the meanings and connotations of winged figures, including suggesting alternatives to the literal interpretation. In other words, I will explore the possibility that representations of winged figures are not meant to connote the actual animal, but rather qualities or associations that the animal might carry. To accomplish this, in Chapter Two I will be using semiotic analysis applied to the problem of winged figures. I will analyze these figures as symbolic, presenting the visual evidence for this interpretation as well as the implications that this leads to. I will also discuss the meanings and significance of anthropomorphization of winged figures in Moche art.

One methodological device that other scholars such as Hocquenghem, Jackson and Donnan have used that I will not is ethnographic analogy. My primary reason for avoiding this methodology is the problem of disjunction.[5] We cannot assume that a figure

[5] The Mesoamerican scholar George Kubler talks extensively about the problems of disjunction, specifically in his article "Period, Style and Meaning in Ancient American Art" in New Literary History, Vol 1, No.2, 1970. Panofsky is also relevant to a discussion on the problems of disjunction in iconographic studies, from *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 84.

has carried the same meaning for over a thousand years, especially with such dramatic shifts in culture that were brought about by the arrival of the Spanish. Even within Moche culture we cannot assume that a particular species or figure held the same meaning at all times and in all places. I will be limiting the corpus temporally, and focusing on phases III and IV, to try to figure out possible meanings figures might have had within these three to four centuries (which itself is a large time frame with lots of room for changed meanings).

Stirrup-Spout Bottles

An overwhelming percentage of Moche vessels with fineline painting are stirrup-spouts, but the reasons for this are not entirely clear. [6] The basic form of a stirrup-spout bottle is a globular body with two spouts at the top joining together into one single spout, shown in Figure 1. The two handles take the form of a stirrup that one would use to climb onto a saddle, hence the name. The body of the vessel and sometimes the spouts are often decorated. In the early periods of use, beginning with the Cupisnique culture around 1200 BCE, the vessels were mostly blackware and decoration was usually incised. By the Moche period stirrup-spouts were mostly made in white or redware and decoration was painted with slip. Because the vessel is globular, the decoration is difficult to study, unless one can work with the vessel in hand. For the majority of the vessels that I am working with, I can only examine photographs and rollout drawings. It is important to use rollout drawings of the fineline paintings as well as photographs (which I have done whenever possible throughout this thesis) in order to understand the scenes and figures

[6] From my own observations between eighty and eight-five percent of decorated vessels are stirrup-spout bottles.

and their original placement on the vessel. However, rollout drawings and photographs are two-dimensional translations of a three-dimensional object, so some information might be lost. For example, modern artists can transcribe fineline painting in different ways, which can sometimes result in very different images. Figures 2a, 2b, and 2c—all drawn within the last fifty years from the same vessel—illustrate this.

There are several debates as to the nature and use of stirrup-spout bottles. Stone-Miller speaks about the utility of the design. She claims that the stirrup shape of the handle allows liquids to stay in the vessel with minimal evaporation, an important property in the dry climate of the Moche. It allows for smooth pouring, because liquid passes through one spout and air enters into another, and the shape of the handle makes it easy to carry by hand or suspended from a rope.[7] However, these claims are dubious, and assume that stirrup-spout bottles were actually intended to hold liquids in the first place. I posit that stirrup-spout bottles were non-utilitarian, at least for the Moche. The vessels were difficult to construct, requiring several phases of construction and molds to create the spouts. They often have a large amount of decoration, which is in many cases complex and difficult to produce on a small three dimensional surface. The scenes and motifs depicted can be characterized as "supernatural" or "ritual," which are decidedly non-utilitarian subjects. Additionally the form of the vessel itself has a long and important history. All of these facts lend themselves to the idea that stirrup-spout bottles were not actually functional as containers of liquid.

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[7] Rebecca Stone-Miller, Art of the Andes (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 103-104.

Many scholars seem to support the non-utilitarian nature of stirrup-spouts. Richard Burger, an archaeologist working with the Formative Period, argues that the 'idiosyncratic' stirrup-spout resonates with dual organizational principles found throughout Andean cultures.[8] Kathleen Berrin, art historian and curator of a major show on Moche art states, "their ceramics [the Moche's] with spouts…are complex to build, easily breakable, and essentially impractical. It is generally accepted that the stirrup-spout had strong religious significance for the earlier Cupisnique and Chavín cultures and thus was an important archaic and sanctified form for the Moche people."[9] Berrin also hypothesizes that perhaps the closed, rounded body and the circuitous spout emphasizes the value of instilling essence, or hidden contents that preserve a material essence or central core. All of these values imply that it would not have been used as an everyday container. Despite Stone-Miller's claims, it was difficult to pour liquids into and out of a stirrup spout bottle, especially the thick fermented corn beer known as chicha that the Moche produced.

I think that the stirrup-spout bottle was for the Moche, and later cultures like the Lambayeque and Chimu, an archaizing and legitimizing form. Moche elites were in all likelihood the ones who commissioned and used such vessels, and perhaps the specific stirrup-spout form was a method of communicating that they were following in the footsteps of earlier cultures. It is also likely that the stirrup-spout shape itself carried symbolic information for the Moche, perhaps speaking to the dualism that seems to have

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[8] Richard Burger, "Life and Afterlife in Pre-Hispanic Peru," in *The Spirit of Ancient Peru*, edited by Kathleen Berrin (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums, 1998), 29.
[9] Kathleen Berrin, "The Spirit of Rafael Larco Hoyle," in *The Spirit of Ancient Peru*, edited by Kathleen Berrin (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums, 1998), 13.

been important for many Andean cultures. Of the eighty ceramic vessels used in this thesis, at least fifty four of them are stirrup-spouts. Stirrup-spouts are the vessels most frequently illustrated with fineline painting and depictions of winged figures. There must have been some inherent value to placing a fineline painting on this form. Characters and scenes placed on stirrup-spout vessels must have held special significance for the Moche, which is why an investigation of them is so important. In this thesis I will examine the winged figures that obviously carried information and meaning, although they are by no means the only subjects found on stirrup-spout bottles.

Chapter 1

Discreet Groups: Contexts and Categories of Winged Species

I have organized winged figures into eight groups: ducks, the Falconidae family, owls, hummingbirds, vultures and condors, other birds, bats and dragonflies. I have based this organization on an analysis of approximately two hundred fineline paintings, although there are hundreds, perhaps thousands of other fineline paintings without winged figures. For each group I will outline the physical characteristics, giving species identifications when possible. I will then discuss the contexts and associations in a section I label 'categories.' I will also bring in relevant analyses by other scholars and any new insights that I have brought.

Winged figures can be divided into naturalistically rendered (zoomorphic) and non-naturalistically rendered (zoo-anthropomorphic, which for the sake of simplicity I will call anthropomorphic), as well as a division into indicators and actors. There may or may not be vastly different meanings behind naturalistic versus anthropomorphic depictions, but there are different meanings between indicators and actors. Many naturalistic representations seem to function as indicators. By indicators I mean birds—often Falconidae or hummingbirds—that appear interspersed among humans or anthropomorphic beings who are usually running or engaged in battle (although indicator birds are found in other activities as well). In these scenes, exemplified by Figure 23, the birds are not participating in the activities, they are instead surrounding the participants. This is in contrast to scenes such as Figure 1 where two hummingbirds are actually participating. These characters are functioning as actors and are usually although not always anthropomorphic. Actors and indicators are two basic divisions for organizing all

the winged species I will discuss; in Chapter Two I will discuss their meanings. In Chapter One I will also discuss my reasoning for analyzing bats and dragonflies along with birds. The category of 'birds' is a modern taxonomic classification, and may not have applied to the Moche classification system. By analyzing every winged figure, I am trying to establish what the status of having wings might have signified for the Moche.

Ducks

Ducks appear in the Moche corpus on fineline paintings as both naturalistic and anthropomorphic figures.[10] While ducks are water birds, on the north coast of Peru they are mostly found in inland bodies of water, and do not seem to be associated with the ocean.[11] Lavallée identifies three species from Moche iconography, *Cairina moschatus, Spatula platalea* and *Anas sp.*[12] It is usually difficult to differentiate between related species of the same kind of animal. According to Lavallée, only two have truly distinct features: the Muscovy duck *Cairina moschatus* can be identified by a caruncle (a small fleshy growth) between the beak and the eye, in addition to the peaked feathers on top of its head; the Northern Shoveller *Spatula platalea*, can be identified by a beak shaped like a spatula.[13] However, Figure 4 appears to show two identical ducks, each with the features of the two different species. For the purposes of this thesis I have not attempted to differentiate between species.

Ducks are relatively easy to identify in Moche art, in naturalistic representations they are shown with small compact bodies, short legs, large and distinctively shaped beaks (that are shown as they would have been seen from above to emphasize the shape) and often a crest of feathers at the top of their heads. Duck wings, especially in

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[10] I have not compiled the numbers for ceramic sculpture for any bird species, only painted scenes; there are at least twenty one fineline painting scenes with ducks.

[11] Larco identified six species of ducks represented in the Moche corpus: *Spatula platalea, Dafila bahamensis, Marila erithrophtalma, Erismatura ferruginea, Cairina moschata* (sic) and *Quequedula cyanoptera*, the first three species being found in both painting and sculpture and the last three being found only in the paintings [according to Larco]. Rafael Larco Hoyle, *Los Mochicas Vol I* (Lima: Casa editora "La Crónica" y "Variedades", 1938), 166.

[12] Daniéle Lavallée, *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica* (Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1970), 58.

[13] Ibid.

anthropomorphic representations, are non-diagnostic in that they are virtually identical to those of many other bird species. In fact, many Moche scenes depict what I call the "standardized wing". Figure 3 shows an image with at least three different orders (in the biological classification) of birds, the beaks and tails are all different and diagnostic, while the wings are rendered exactly the same.

Duck Categories

Natural ducks seem to appear exclusively in scenes with other natural flora and fauna, as shown in Figures 4 and 5. In such scenes ducks take up a large part of the composition of the vessel, but sometimes there is another bird, fish or snails. Flowers often surround such figures. Natural ducks possibly appear in scenes with supernatural creatures and actions, such as Figures 6 and 7. In these scenes an anthropomorphic being, usually some variation of Wrinkle Face, is surrounded by one or more generic birds, which could be identified as ducks or sea birds. I think that such winged figures are more likely to be sea birds, such as loons or cormorants, because these scenes often include an anthropomorphic ocean creature, such as a crab or giant fish.[14]

Anthropomorphic ducks can be identified on the basis of their distinctive "spatula" shaped beaks. Wings and bodies are not usually different from other anthropomorphized winged figures, although the tail is almost always different among birds and other winged species. Figure 3 shows several winged figures, including two different kinds of hummingbirds, a falcon, a duck, a bat and a dragonfly. In this image,

[14] I recognize that my reasoning here might be somewhat circular. I stated earlier that ducks seem to be associated more with inland bodies of water then with the ocean, so I presume that figures of birds with Wrinkle Face are actually sea birds and not ducks because of my presumed association of ducks with only inland bodies of water. Nevertheless, given that ducks are naturally present more in the valleys than with the ocean, I think it is safer to associate sea birds specifically with the Wrinkle Face scenes.

the four anthropomorphic bird figures are quite similar: they have the same clothing, body markings and wings, but the tails are all different, even between the two hummingbirds.

Anthropomorphic ducks—actors—are usually shown as warriors or runners. Figures 8 and 9 depict anthropomorphic duck runners. Often duck runners are shown by themselves. They do appear with other anthropomorphic animal runners on at least three occasions. These animals are (in order of frequency of appearance) hummingbirds, serpent-foxes, hawks, felines, foxes and centipedes. There are at least four depictions of anthropomorphic duck warriors. Figure 10 with detail in 10a shows an anthropomorphic duck as a warrior holding a club and shield in a complex battle narrative. Figure 11 shows a duck as a warrior in a repeated motif with a hawk warrior. Often duck warriors are shown with other birds, most commonly hawks and hummingbirds.

Another context for anthropomorphic ducks, with at least one extant example, is in the larger narrative scene known as the Sacrifice Ceremony. I will discuss this scene more in depth in the section on owls. The Sacrifice Ceremony is a narrative arc where human prisoners have their throats slit, the blood is collected in a goblet, the goblet is passed on to several successive figures (the identification of these figures can vary throughout the different iterations of the scene) and usually given to a central rayed figure. In Figure 12, an anthropomorphic duck is shown holding a goblet that is presumably filled with the blood of the human who is in the process of having his throat slit. Other figures also hold goblets, including a monkey, hummingbird and a rayed figure.

It might be helpful here to consider why ducks specifically would be depicted as runners and warriors. The natural behavior of the animal is one possible reason, and perhaps the Moche linked this behavior with qualities that would be necessary for warriors or runners. Benson hypothesizes that the Muscovy duck she identifies in Moche art "is a strong, swift flier and is large and aggressive."[15] It is plausible that the strength, speed and aggressiveness of ducks are qualities that make the Moche depict them as warriors; it is also plausible that their flight speed is what makes the Moche depict them as runners.

We must also allow for the possibility that it is not the behavior of the animal but rather one of the features—the beak—that marks it as a warrior.[16] One of the weapons found in the Moche world and throughout Andean cultures is the tumi knife. This knife, shown in Figure 13, has a distinctive shape that closely resembles the beak of ducks depicted in Moche art. It is often shown with scenes of blood sacrifice and other important ritual acts. The ceramic in Figure 14 shows a sculpture of an anthropomorphized duck warrior holding a square shield and a war club. The beak of the duck was not molded with the rest of the piece, but made separately and glued onto the statue, then removed before the placement in the tomb. This might be an indication that the beak, not the traits of the animal, was the most important information for the

[15] Elizabeth Benson, *Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 31. Although Benson identifies the anthropomorphic ducks as Muscovy ducks, I do not feel that there is enough information in such depictions to definitively name a species.

[16] Other scholars, including Bourget, have also suggested this. Steve Bourget, personal communication, June 30, 2010.

Moche.[17] Although we will never know for sure, if true we can interpret depictions of ducks, especially duck warriors, as living embodiments of these knives.

[17] This ceramic was found in Tomb 2 (a chamber tomb burial of a male between the ages of 20 and 35 in Platform 1 at Huaca de la Luna) along with seventeen other ceramic objects, and was purposefully broken. Tello et al. notes, "Es interesante indicar que esta última vasija fue rota intencionalmente durante el ritual funerario." "Prácticas funerarias Moche en las Huacas del Sol y de la Luna," in *Hacia el Fin del Milenio, Actas Del Segundo Coloquio Sobre La Cultura Moche, Trujillo, 1 De 7 De Agosto De 1999*. Vol. 1, eds. Santiago Uceda and Elias Mujica (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, 2003), 176.

The Falconidae Family[18]

Members of the Falconidae family—which consists of many diurnal birds of prey such as hawks, ospreys, kestrels, eagles and falcons—appear both naturalistically and anthropomorphically in fineline paintings in the Moche corpus.[19] There are several different species within the Falconidae family that might be represented in the Moche corpus: the aplomado falcon (*Falco femoralis*), sparrow hawk or American kestrel (*F. sparverius*), common hawk (*Astur misus*), and the osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*).[20] Although these species can vary greatly in terms of size, physical features, environmental associations and behavior, the Moche seem to group them together and give them the same iconographic associations. Indeed, it is often very difficult to narrow down a bird in the Falconidae family to a particular species.

Iconographically, birds in the Falconidae family are shown with relatively long curved beaks that are generally either all black or white with a black tip. The tails are long and can be straight or slightly curved, sometimes all white or sometimes spotted. They are always shown with the "standardized wing". They have almond shaped eyes, and can look very similar to owls. It can be difficult to identify which bird order (Falconiformes for falcons, hawks and diurnal birds of prey or Strigiformes for owls or other nocturnal birds of prey) is being depicted iconographically. The osprey is the

[18] I use the modern taxonomic classification of the Falconidae family here to refer the group of diurnal falcon-like birds of prey that appear often in the Moche corpus. We have no information about the Moche taxonomic system, but I have grouped these birds together because there are rarely iconographic indicators to further identify genus or species of this group. Throughout this paper I will use the term 'Falconidae', in addition to using 'hawk' and 'falcon' interchangeably.

[19] There are at least sixty fineline painting scenes with Falconidae in the Moche corpus.

[20] Larco, Los Mochicas, 166, Lavallée, *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica,* 58-59, Benson, Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America, 80.

exception because ospreys can be identified by the spiky plumes on top of its head.[21] Figure 15 shows a scene with several different anthropomorphized Falconidae; 15a shows two Falconidae warriors, and 15b shows a Falconidae litter bearer.

Differentiating Hawks and Owls

In such scenes where it is unclear—at least immediately—whether the bird depicted is an owl or a Falconidae, there are a few criteria that I have developed, based on thorough organization and a close analysis of many images within the corpus.[22] Naturalistic depictions of hawks and owls are relatively easy to differentiate, exemplified by Figures 16 and 17. The birds in Figure 16 are likely ospreys with their spiked plumes, and are shown with long curved beaks and long curved tail feathers. The owl in Figure 17 is shown in frontal view (which is rare in the Moche corpus), with a shorter hooked beak, accentuated eye disks, highly decorated feathers and relatively short and straight tail feathers. Additionally, the talons of the owl are given more prominence as compared to the talons of Falconidae. These general observations based on naturalistic depictions can be applied to anthropomorphic depictions as well, although we have a significantly larger amount of anthropomorphic scenes for both of these groups. The main categories in which we find anthropomorphic hawks and owls are scenes of warfare and what I call litter bearing. In my analyses of winged figures, I have found that only falcons appear in

[21] It is possible that spiky plumes may not be an indicator of the osprey precisely, but a general diagnostic feature for the Falconidae family; in other words the spiky plumes could be a method of differentiating ospreys, hawks and falcons from owls.

[22] The reason depictions of Falconidae (chiefly diurnal birds of prey) and owls (chiefly nocturnal birds of prey) look similar in Moche art is likely because the birds themselves look similar, and fill similar roles ecologically. According to ornithologists, "Owls are ecologically the nocturnal counterparts to diurnal birds of prey, without being related with them. Anatomically and behaviorally there are large differences between such groups although they occupy similar ecological niches." Claus König et al, *Owls: A Guide to the Owls of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 19.

running scenes, while only owls appear in leadership roles such as the so-called "Owl Priest" in the Sacrifice Ceremony.[23]

For differentiating between hawk warriors and owl warriors, the context of the figures is important. For example, Figures 18 and 19 both show an anthropomorphic owl warrior, so identified on the basis of eye disks, short hooked beaks (as opposed to long curved beaks) and their highly decorated wings and tails. Figure 18 is particularly easy to identify as an owl because of the beak, tail and highly emphasized talons, along with the naturalistic owls shown along the spout of the bottle. In the images that I consulted, owl warriors are only shown by themselves or in pairs, but never with other birds. Falcon warriors, such as those shown in Figures 20, 21 and 22, have different features and contexts. Figures 20 and 21 are very stylistically similar, each showing two anthropomorphic birds. The character on the right in Figure 20 is a hummingbird, but the other three are falcons. This is based on the observation that no other owl warriors are shown with other species; additionally there is a strong association between hawks and hummingbirds, which I will discuss in the next section.

Figure 22 is a complex scene that is classified under the Revolt of the Objects category, and contains an owl and two warrior hawks, as shown in the details 22a and 22b. The owl is identified as such by his short hooked beak as well as his clothing. An owl similar in appearance to this character can be found in other scenes such as the Sacrifice Ceremony and shows him as a high-status figure. He is standing alone on top of a structure overlooking the battle, while holding a war club. The two falcons, identified

[23] Benson confirms my observation that owls are never found in running scenes in *The Mochica* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 52.

by their longer curved beaks and much plainer clothing, are actively engaged in the battle. One last scene, Figure 15, can illustrate the differences between these species. Unlike some of the other images, Figure 15 seems to show the birds with similar statuses. The owl again has the shorter hooked beak with accentuated eye disks and feathers. The hawks have longer curved beaks and smaller eyes. There is also a small osprey. So while hawks and owls are sometimes, but not often, shown in similar contexts, close analysis of the actions they are performing as well as the physical characteristics can be relatively effective in differentiating between the two.

Hawks and Hummingbirds

Naturalistic and anthropomorphic hawks appear in many warfare and running scenes, almost always with hummingbirds.[24] The two types of birds are shown together so often that it warrants a joint analysis. In the Moche corpus there are at least eight scenes like Figures 23 and 24 where hawks and hummingbirds are indicators, surrounding scenes with humans fighting or running. The birds do not interact with each other, but instead indicate or highlight the human figures. In Figure 23 the hawk figure is almost hovering face down between two fighting humans. Two hummingbirds, proportionally much smaller than the hawk as they would be in nature, fly above. In Figure 24 a hummingbird and hawk of equal size and seemingly equal status are flying around a running human.

[24]Again, there are at least sixty fineline painting scenes with Falconidae. Eleven are warfare scenes with hawks as indicators; of those eleven four are only hawks and the other seven are hawks and hummingbirds. There are two running scenes with hawks as indicators, and the two also have hummingbirds in them. There are seventeen warfare scenes with hawks as actors; of those ten only have hawks while the other seven have both hawks and hummingbirds. There are at least seventeen running scenes with hawks as actors; of those six only have hawks while the other eleven have both hawks and hummingbirds.

In addition to appearing often with Falconidae indicators, hummingbirds often appear with Falconidae actors. Figures 3 and 25 show two typical scenes with anthropomorphic hawks and hummingbirds, and occasionally other anthropomorphic figures. In running scenes, hawks and hummingbirds are often shown together, both as indicators and actors. Figure 26 is unusual in that it shows running hawk and hummingbird actors surrounded by hawk and hummingbird indicators.

Warfare scenes are different than running scenes. In many scenes hawks and hummingbirds are indicators, and usually naturalistic. However, hawk and hummingbird actors are not usually shown actually engaged in fighting, instead they are usually shown simply holding weapons and shields, as illustrated by Figures 20 and 27. This is in contrast to other scenes in which hawk and hummingbird actors are shown actually running. Only one scene that I am aware of shows hawks actually engaged in battle, shown in Figures 22 with detail in 22b.[25]

The reason for the strong association between hawks and hummingbirds is unclear. Both birds appear in similar contexts and scenes, rendered in very similar ways. It is possible that the Moche had some mythology or narrative that explained the association and this may have had nothing at all to do with the natural world. Alternatively, the association between the two may have been the result of an observation of the natural behaviors of hawks and hummingbirds. Benson notes that "Hummingbirds are very hard for predators to catch or kill; they duck away, out-maneuvering the predator. They fly fantastically fast and are magnificently maneuverable. They dive-

[25] There is also a hummingbird in Figure 19, but it is not actually engaged in the battle, instead it appears to be holding some sort of bag.

bomb hawks and owls, raptors enormously larger than they are."[26] Perhaps when hummingbirds and hawks are depicted in Moche art, they are a reference to the speed and aggressiveness that these birds display towards each other in the natural world. This would explain why we see them so often in warfare contexts. However, the explanation is likely not as simple as that, because these birds are never depicted directly attacking each other. Further, in many scenes in which hawks and hummingbirds are runners, they seem to be running together, perhaps indicating that they are working together in some capacity.

Hawk Categories

Hawks and falcons can be organized into basic categories of naturalistic and anthropomorphic depictions, and there are several contexts within these categories. One of the categories is a scene with a naturalistic Falconidae, likely an osprey, feeding out of a bowl, pictured in Figure 28. This scene is found on at least nine different vessels, with very little differentiation. According to Donnan this motif is found in Phases IV and V (spanning several hundred years).[27] Bourget has linked the bowls with blood sacrifice, these bowls are used to collect blood while goblets in other representations are used to present the blood.[28]

Naturalistic hawks also appear often as indicators in scenes of warfare, such as Figure 29. This scene depicts fighting humans surrounded by six naturalistic hawks and

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[26] Elizabeth Benson "In Love and War: Hummingbird Lore," in *"In Love and War: Hummingbird Lore" And Other Selected Papers from Laila/Alila's 1988 Symposium* ed. Mary Preuss (Culver City, California: Labyrinthos, 1989), 4.
[27] Christopher Donnan, *Moche Fineline Painting: Its Evolution and Its Artists* (Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1999), 180.
[28] Steve Bourget, personal communication, April 14, 2010.

two naturalistic hummingbirds. There are eleven of these scenes in the Moche corpus, in them the hawks are not actors, they are merely flying around the periphery. In Figures 16 and 30 the hawks are the only characters, so they are still naturalistic, but function as actors instead of indicators.

One could argue that indicator hawks flying around human figures engaged in warfare or running could be functioning as decorative motifs to the scene. However I propose that indicator hawks as well as hummingbirds are functioning as semiotic markers in scenes such as Figure 29. This is what I mean when I use the term indicator. Scholars such as Donnan and Hocquenghem have proposed that hummingbirds are semiotic markers of speed, agility and aggressiveness in such scenes, and I suggest that hawks have very similar connotations. In the previous section I outlined how the contexts for the two birds are similar, and they appear in the same scenes more often than not. I doubt that both semiotic markers had the same meaning however; in fact, if they had the same meaning it would negate their function as semiotic markers.

It is possible that the Moche gave significance to specific physical traits that hawks had, however the evidence for this is not known to us. I think it is more likely that hawks as indicators are semiotic markers of the behaviors of hawks, specifically their prowess as hunters. Falconidae are diurnal birds of prey that are exceptionally good hunters. In scenes with tiny hawks flying in between and around warriors, they might be functioning as markers of swiftness and strength, especially for the victorious warrior. This would also explain why they are so often associated with blood and capture, such as the bowl scene illustrated in Figure 28 and scenes related to the Sacrifice Ceremony.

The second major category for Falconidae is anthropomorphic representations, which generally consist of a raptorial bird head, wings and tail attached to a human torso, with human arms and legs. These anthropomorphic hawks usually function as actors, although occasionally anthropomorphic hawks can also be indicators. Running and warfare scenes comprise the bulk of these representations, with running scenes being much more common with anthropomorphic hawks than with naturalistic hawks. As stated previously, in such scenes anthropomorphic hawks are actually running, while anthropomorphic warriors are shown standing with weapons and shields and not usually engaged in battle. This may have had a specific meaning, or it may simply have been artistic shorthand. Artistically, it may have been difficult to represent a runner without showing him running, whereas to represent a warrior an artist would only need to show a figure holding a shield and war club without needing to show that figure actually engaged in battle.

Besides warfare and running, hawks appear in a few other contexts. Most of these contexts are found in only one or two images, and are difficult to reconcile with a larger narrative. A handful of representations depict an activity known as the "Bean and Stick Game", shown in Figures 31 and 32.[29] This activity usually shows pairs of beings who sit facing each other, holding or surrounded by beans and short sticks. The characters shown can vary, but hawks are sometimes present, as the "players" like in Figure 31, or

[29] Hocquenghem and earlier scholars, notably Vivante, label this type of scene as a "game" and Hocquenghem interprets it as a rite related to agricultural fertility, and death rites, using ethnographic and Inca analogies. Anne Marie Hocquenghem, *Iconografia Mochica*,(San Miguel, Perú: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 1987), 146-156. In general I disagree with this analytical method, and particularly here I see no bearing between the images depicted and the complex rites that she suggests.

surrounding them, which seems to be the case in Figure 32.[30] Owls also appear in a similar context as "players" in this activity involving beans and sticks, illustrated in Figure 84.

Figure 33 shows an activity labeled "Ceremonial Badminton," in which hawks and possibly some other birds (although several of these characters have birds heads but no wings) seem to be engaged in a ritual sport. In Figure 34 several birds that seem to be hawks are being hunted by men. Finally, the last context for hawks is illustrated in the Sacrifice Ceremony in Figure 12. A small hawk is shown holding a tumi knife drawing blood from a human prisoner, and another hawk-like figure is holding a plate that would have been used to cover the goblet of blood being passed towards the main rayed figure.

[30] Donnan, Moche Fineline Painting, 114-115. It should be noted that other scholars, notably Hocquenghem (Iconografía Mochica, Figure 56) have classified Figure 33 under scenes of running. While the human in this scene does seem to be in the running pose, the fact that he is holding sticks and surrounded by beans leads me to categorize him with scenes of the bean and stick activity.

Owls

Owls appear almost always anthropomorphically in both fineline paintings and sculpture.[31] The two different families within the order of Strigiformes, barn owls (Tytonidae) and typical owls (Strigidae), are both rendered in Moche art. Some of the species identified include the Burrowing Owl *Speotyto cunicularia*, *Athene cunicularia*, the Belfry Barn Owl (*Tyto alva contempta*), *Strix bubo* and *Strix perlata*.[32] For owls, and other nocturnal birds of prey, the particular structure of the wings permits an extremely quiet flight. They hunt by lying in wait or flying over the fields at low altitudes and feed on small mammals, mostly rodents that they trap in their claws or beak.[33]

As discussed previously, the Moche represented owls in a very similar manner as Falconidae. Owls are generally shown with smaller bodies, short, hooked beaks, large almond shaped eyes that often are accompanied with facial disks, relatively short tails (that are sometimes decorated along with the wings), and accentuated talons. Eyes in particular are key diagnostic features. Owls are depicted with rings of feathers, referred to as facial discs. The eyes themselves are set frontally, as in humans, which is likely why owls are occasionally shown with a frontal profile as in Figure 16.[34] The axis of their eyes allows for maximum binocular (stereoscopic) perception, which enables them to hunt so effectively.[35]

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[31] There are at least nineteen fineline painting scenes with owls in the Moche corpus.
[32] Lavallée, *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica,* 61, Benson, *Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America*, 84, and Larco, *Los Mochicas*, 166.
[33] Bourget, "Los Raptores de Almas," 38.
[34] König et al, *Owls: A Guide to the Owls of the World*, 19.
[35] Paul Johnsgard, *North American Owls*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 24.

In the fineline painting corpus, owls are not represented as often as might be expected, given their near ubiquity in other media such as metalworking. Necklaces made of owls heads rendered in metal are found on many figures and in funerary contexts throughout the Moche realm, as shown in Figures 35 and 36. Owl heads are sometimes found on headdresses in funerary contexts as well, the most famous example being the headdress from Tomb Two at Sipan, shown in Figure 37.[36] Such archaeological contexts have prompted some scholars to interpret the deceased entombed with such finery as being costumed—and perhaps performing as—owls. While this may have been true, there are also several other possibilities and meanings embedded in such depictions.

One idea that has been explored, but perhaps can be applied to other contexts, is the idea of the owl as a decapitator figure. The locus of the idea of the owl as a decapitator comes from the natural behavior of the animal. During the season when agricultural fields are at their most productive, rodent populations (specifically the *Oryzomys* genus) also rise. The Barn Owl *Tyto alva contempta*, as well as other birds of prey who feast on rodents, will increase its hunting in response. But the owl has a particular hunting method: it will grab a rodent in its claws, decapitate it with its beak, and allow the blood to drain from its body. The bird then stores it in a secure location such as the trunk of a tree and continues to hunt and store many rodents in this manner; the animal does this in order to preserve the carcass to last longer than it normally would

[36] The funerary context for this headdress was in a royal burial of a male found with many layers of finery, including much metal work (which is found almost exclusively in elite Moche tombs). The headdress was made of gilded copper with an owl head inlaid with shell and turquoise and large and complex wings with metal feathers. Walter Alva and Christopher Donnan, *Royal Tombs of Sipan* (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1993), 143-157.

and have a reserve for days when rodents are less plentiful.[37] This decapitation and subsequent bloodletting is a very evocative image, and was also beneficial to the humans whose harvests the rodents would otherwise destroy. So the owl has a role in the Moche world as a powerful hunter and decapitator. An owl as decapitator is vividly illustrated in Figure 38, where the owl holds a tumi knife in one hand and a human head in the other.

Owl Categories

Owls do not appear in large numbers in paintings, which might be due to their seemingly very high status and involvement in important ritual scenes. Naturalistic owls are rare, and generally shown by themselves, such as in Figures 17 and 39.[38] Anthropomorphic owls are shown occasionally as warriors, in somewhat similar contexts as ducks, hawks and hummingbirds. Figure 18 shows a typical owl warrior representation. The owl is by itself, although naturalistic owls decorate the spout of the vessel, with a large weapons bundle and war club, and the talons on his feet have been accentuated by the Moche artist. Most owl warriors are shown in this manner, and do not usually interact with other figures.

The most prominent category for anthropomorphic owl depictions is in the Sacrifice Ceremony, sometimes referred to as the Presentation Theme. Figures 2a, 40 and 41 illustrate this complex scene, where blood from sacrificed human prisoners is passed along to several people and finally presented to the central rayed figure. The anthropomorphic owl is one of the main presenters of this goblet of blood, and is usually the closest to the main rayed figure. Moche scholars have discussed this scene and its

[37] Bourget, “Los Raptores de Almas,” 38.

implications at great length. I will add that it seems very likely that the owl's role in this scene is related to the natural behavior of the animal that drains blood from the field mice it catches, in a very similar manner to the human sacrifices that are dispatched in this scene. Throughout these scenes the owl character is in a strikingly similar position, holding the goblet or a large plate that would have likely covered the goblet, in the act of passing it to an even more important figure. The owl figure in these scenes is never shown performing the throat slitting and collecting of blood, instead these activities are left to characters that seem to have a less important status.

Another scene category in which anthropomorphic owls appears is the "Revolt of the Objects" theme, a detail of which is illustrated from Figure 22. The owl figure in this scene has a large headdress and clothing associated with high status figures, and is holding a war club. He stands atop a stepped structure, which likely represents a building, and seems to be presiding over the battle between humans and animated objects.

The last major category for anthropomorphic owls, at least in terms of fineline painting depictions, is related to the owl and their associations with the world of the dead.[39] Bourget has argued that the predatory methods of owls probably inspired the Moche to associate them with the transport of human bodies into the afterworld. In the same manner in which they trap rodents with their claws and in their beaks, metaphorically, they carry humans in order to transport them to the beyond. From

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[38] These two images, along with the owls decorating the spout of Figure 42, are the only examples of naturalistic owls that I have found.

[39] Ornithologists note that "Because of their nocturnal habits, owls have been regarded by superstitious humans as birds of ill omen. They have been associated with death..." König et al, *Owls: A Guide to the Owls of the World*, 11.

capturers of rodents, they are converted into kidnappers of souls.[40] This is illustrated in Figures 42 and 43, where owls carry humans, and we can interpret this with a relative degree of certainty as deceased humans being carried to the underworld.

[40] Bourget, “Los Raptores de Almas,” 39.

Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds appear on fineline paintings rendered both naturalistically and anthropomorphically.[41] There are no examples rendered in sculpture, despite the large amount of hummingbirds in the fineline painting corpus. There are hundreds of species of hummingbirds throughout the new world, and they appear in a variety of environments. The most likely species being depicted by the Moche are *Amazilia amazilia, Rhodopis vesper, Leucippus baeri, Patagona gigas*, and *Trochilus colubris.*[42] Hummingbirds are generally quite small (the exception being *Patagona gigas* which is the largest member of the hummingbird family and can reach lengths of eight and a half inches).

The characteristics of hummingbirds are relevant in understanding depictions of them. They are incredibly fast, and the only family of birds that can hover and fly in any direction, including backwards. Because their wings beat so rapidly, they are practically invisible when hovering or darting between flowers. Their long beaks—which account for at least a third of their body length—are used to suck the nectar out of flowers and to capture insects. Male hummingbirds are extremely belligerent, attacking and driving off each other as well as other much larger birds and animals that invade their territory (they have been known to dive-bomb hawks and owls).[43] Their offensive skills are also quite impressive, being able to duck away from and out-maneuver their predators in flight.[44]

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[41] There are at least seventy six fineline painting scenes with hummingbirds in the Moche corpus.
[42] Lavallée, *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica,* 61, and Larco, *Los Mochicas*, 166.
[43] Alexander Skutch, *The Life of the Hummingbird* (New York: Crown, 1973), 83-85.
[44] Another possibly relevant characteristic of hummingbirds is their adaptation to El Niño conditions. These conditions affect a large proportion of plant and animal life along the coast, resulting in high mortality rates for many animals, but benefiting certain species, notably Andean condors. Sahley reported that *Rhodopis vesper* was in a much better position to feed off of cactus and the insects that flourished during El Niño. It is likely that hummingbirds along the coast of Peru benefitted from these adverse conditions because of an increase in certain food sources and a lack of competition from larger animals.

Hummingbirds are depicted by the Moche with certain diagnostic features. The beak is rendered long and narrow, and can be completely straight but often has a slight curve at the end. The beak is generally almost as long as the length of the rest of the body. The tail is long and almost always split into two parts. The birds are shown with small bodies that are usually solid black, but sometimes shown with a white band across the neck, or sometimes shown spotted. These birds are rendered proportionally much larger than they are in real life. Often the naturalistic hummingbirds are about half the size of human figures in the scenes. It is likely that the Moche purposefully scaled up the size so the viewer could know that they were in fact hummingbirds. If drawn in the correct proportional size to the human figures, they would appear as black specks on the ceramics, and their value as information carriers would be lost. The fact that the Moche wanted to communicate the genus (if not species) of the bird seems to signal that they were important and carried information.

Hummingbird Categories

As mentioned previously, the contexts for hummingbirds and hawks are very similar, and the two birds are more often than not found in scenes together in Moche art, although there are more depictions of hummingbirds than there are of hawks. Hummingbird representations can be divided into scenes where they function as indicators or actors. Indicator hummingbirds are found in scenes with running and warfare. Actor hummingbirds are found in scenes with running and warfare, in addition to other contexts.

Catherine Sahley, "Bat and Hummindbird Pollination of an Autotetraploid Columnar Cactus, Weberbauerocereus Weberbaueri," *American Journal of Botany* 83, no. 10 (1996): 1335.

A running scene with indicator hummingbirds is shown in Figure 44. In scenes such as this, hummingbirds are usually rendered naturalistically flying between runners. Occasionally hawks appear with hummingbirds, but more often it is only one or several hummingbirds and human runners. The birds are not interacting with the runners in any way. In warfare contexts, hummingbirds as indicators can be depicted with warfare implements, such as the weapons bundle in Figure 45 (along with a pair of dragonflies); in scenes of human combat such as in Figure 46; and in scenes of combat between anthropomorphic beings as in Figure 47. Hawks appear with hummingbirds more often in warfare scenes than they do in running scenes. Also, as contrasted with running scenes, although the birds do not directly interact with figures, they are often pointing at them.

Usually (in at least eleven scenes) the hummingbirds are pointing their beaks towards the victors or the war bundles. This could be an indication that the hummingbirds are marking the winners in some way, perhaps emphasizing that victors of battles possessed the agility of hummingbirds. However, in at least two images the hummingbirds are pointing at the loser of the battle. In Figure 48 two hummingbirds are both pointing towards the captured prisoner. In Figure 49 hummingbirds point at both the victors and a prisoner. It is possible to interpret these two instances as artistic oversights, or a function of the fact that Moche iconography is never absolutely consistent. Or we can infer that hummingbirds are not meant to convey information about specific figures in such scenes. Perhaps the hummingbirds were conveying information about the action in general, or the prisoners in Figures 48 and 49 were part of a larger narrative under a different set of iconographic conventions.

Hummingbirds are also sometimes present as indicators in hunting scenes, as shown in Figure 50. I identify the winged beings in Figure 50 as hummingbirds even though they are not depicted with split tails, which is one of the usual iconographic markers for hummingbirds. In this case the length and shape of the beak is the diagnostic indicating the genus. There are other depictions of hummingbirds with non-split tails, notably Figure 3, in which one hummingbird has a split tail and one does not. This may indicate different species being depicted, or it may again simply be an artistic oversight. Hunting scenes can be categorized along with warfare scenes because hunting and combat are considered by many scholars to be parallel activities for the Moche.[45]

Indicator hummingbirds are also shown in warfare scenes directly related to the Sacrifice Ceremony discussed earlier in the section on Owls. Figure 51 is unusual in scenes of the Sacrifice Ceremony because it shows human combat, followed by a small section with human sacrifice, then the presentation of blood. Normally scenes of human combat are not shown on the same vessel with the sacrifice and presentation of blood, although this may be due to the fact that the sample size is very small. In other scenes of the Sacrifice Ceremony hummingbirds appear, but they are usually anthropomorphic and accompanying a litter rather than naturalistic and surrounding warriors in battle.

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[45] Bourget has discussed this relationship in his article "Children and Ancestors: Ritual Practices at the Moche Site of Huaca De La Luna, North Coast of Peru" in *Ritual Sacrifice in Ancient Peru*, eds. Elizabeth Benson and Anita Cook (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001), where he states on page 110 “I would tend to see the deer hunt and the killing of sea lions as closely associated with the war of capture and the sacrifice of warriors. The relationship of sea-lion hunting is made even clearer by showing, in some cases, sea lion hunters carrying not only the special mace, but shields of warriors.” He goes on to say on page 112 that “Ritual warfare and ritual hunting are so closely related to one another that the war of capture can, in fact, signify metaphorically the ritual hunting of sacrificial victims.” Donnan makes a similar analysis of hunting and warfare in his chapter "Deer Hunting and Combat: Parallel Activities in the Moche World" in *The Spirit of Ancient Peru,* ed. Kathleen Berrin (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museum, 1997).

There is one last category for hummingbirds as indicators that is unique among winged figures and possibly among all the animals: hummingbirds within depictions of textiles on ceramic vessels. Figure 52 is famous because it is the only known Moche vessel that depicts weaving. The actual textile being woven, shown enlarged, has an image of an anthropomorphic hummingbird holding a club and shield. Although this figure is tiny, we can deduce it is a hummingbird from the long beak and split tail. Other vessels show characters wearing a similar textile, notably Figure 53. This scene, where anthropomorphic beans and deer (a common animal depicted in hunting scenes) battle, illustrates once again the relationship between hunting, warfare and hummingbirds. It seems likely that such textiles were relatively common and different figures wore them. Because textiles do not survive well in the Moche area, it is hard to answer this question with archaeological evidence.

There are over forty scenes with hummingbirds functioning as indicators in the Moche fineline painting corpus, which is a fairly large amount. We must interpret them as symbolic in some way, or alternately, we have to assume that hummingbirds swarmed the battlefields and landscape of the Moche world, which is both slightly ludicrous and antithetical to the natural behavior of such birds. Several scholars have proposed, and I concur, that hummingbirds are semiotic markers of a complex of qualities—including speed, aggressiveness and defensive strategies—which would have been desirable traits for warriors and runners. I will discuss this further in Chapter Two.

Hummingbirds as actors—frequently depicted as anthropomorphic—appear in many of the same types of scenes (such as warfare and running) in which hummingbirds

as indicators appear. Figures 54 and 55 show anthropomorphic hummingbirds in warfare scenes. In warfare scenes hummingbird actors are usually shown with hawks, standing in a line holding weapons and never actually engaged in battle. In this manner hummingbirds are similar to many other anthropomorphized animals, who are shown holding warfare implements but not fighting.

Hummingbird runners are much more common than hummingbird warriors, in terms of anthropomorphic renditions.[46] The situation is reversed for hummingbirds as indicators, where warfare scenes are much more common than running scenes. This may simply be generated by the nature of the sample, or it may indicate a deeper meaning. It is possible that actor hummingbirds had such different meanings than indicator hummingbirds that they were players in different narratives, or their qualities were more evocative in different activities.

Hummingbird runners, as shown in Figures 9 and 56, are shown occasionally by themselves, but more often with other anthropomorphic runners. Animals that appear with anthropomorphic hummingbirds are (in order of frequency) hawks, serpent-foxes, dragonflies, felines, foxes, ducks, centipedes, iguanas, bats and mice. On at least one occasion, as in Figure 57, hummingbird runners are shown with other human runners, notably on a smaller scale than the humans. Sometimes indicator hummingbirds fly around hummingbird runners, signifying that the two different manifestations of the bird have different meanings.

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[46] There are at least seventeen depictions of anthropomorphic hummingbird runners as compared to (at least) only six depictions of anthropomorphic hummingbird warriors, while by contrast there are at least eighteen war-related scenes with naturalistic hummingbirds and at least eleven running scenes with naturalistic hummingbirds. It is very likely that this is simply a matter of what percentage of these original vessels has survived, but we must not completely discount the possibility of a greater meaning.

Actor hummingbirds appear in several other contexts in addition to running and warfare. On at least six vessels they appear carrying or surrounding a litter which holds a rayed figure, illustrated in Figures 1, 15 and 58. They often carry warfare implements such as clubs and shields in these scenes. The characters depicted in Figure 15 cannot conclusively be identified as hummingbirds. The smaller figure, 15c, does not have the characteristic split tail, but the long narrow beak makes it hard to confuse it with any other bird. The character in detail 15d appears to be a human dressed as a hummingbird, a representation that we find in a few other vessels. It is possible that showing this character to be a human masquerading as a hummingbird signifies that all or most of the other anthropomorphic animals in this scene, including several other winged figures, are also humans costumed as animals. In Chapter Two I will elaborate on this costume argument.

Hummingbirds as litter-bearers also appear in conjunction with the Sacrifice Ceremony. Figures 2a and 59 show several hummingbirds who are flying or sitting around the empty litter; the rayed figure in the top register was probably the occupant of the litter. The role that hummingbirds are playing in these images is unclear. They could possibly signify the speed at which the litter was carried, or they might have another meaning entirely that is lost to us. One last image, Figure 60, shows what might be a hummingbird seated in a litter being carried by anthropomorphic iguanas. Because the identification of the seated figure is unclear—there seems to be a long beak characteristic of hummingbirds, but no wings or tail—it is difficult to even speculate what this image might mean. It is possible that he is not a hummingbird at all, and might even be the same character that is seated in the litter in Figure 58.

In at least one image, Figure 12, hummingbirds appear again in the Sacrifice Ceremony, but this time in a different role. The anthropomorphic hummingbird, along with a duck, monkey and some kind of hawk or owl, are holding goblets containing blood collected from the sacrificial victim whose throat is being slit by another hawk or owl figure (likely a hawk, because the owl is never shown actually cutting the throat of human victims on any other vessels). The rayed figure that is present in other Sacrifice Ceremony depictions is also in this scene. It is unclear why the duck and hummingbird are actors in this scene, as they are not in any other extant Sacrifice Ceremony depictions (to my knowledge).

There are two possible additional contexts for hummingbird actors, and the meanings for both are unclear. Figure 31 shows a scene with the "Bean and Stick Game" in which hawks also appear. The figure to the far left on the lowest register might be a hummingbird, or it might be a badly drawn hawk. The final context is a hummingbird holding a large sack in a complex warfare scene. There are at least two vessels with this depiction, illustrated in Figure 22. The character is clearly a hummingbird, shown with wings, beak and split tail, but the action he is performing and his larger role in the scene is unknown.

Vultures and Condors

Vultures and condors appear rendered naturalistically and anthropomorphically, in both painting and sculpture.[47] New World Vultures and condors are classified under the Cathartidae family. The Moche represented them differently, depicting condors as different from the other species of vultures. However for the purposes of this study I group them into one category, the same way that I have grouped Falconidae together. Cathartidae are very closely associated with Falconidae biologically speaking; they are both part of the same order of Falconiformes. Many of the species from both families are large birds of prey with immense wingspans that are found in a variety of environments, such as valleys, coasts and even the highlands. However there are certain characteristics that set vultures apart from falcons. Benson puts it best when she states:

> Vultures are aerodynamically the best of the soaring land birds, riding majestically on air currents, rising on thermals, then gliding. They are related to eagles. On the ground, vultures are important to human health. Where there is no plumbing, they provide sanitation services. Cleaning the earth of rotting flesh and excrement, they consume and transform death and waste…Vultures' eating habits give them a natural connection with the world of the dead, and they sometimes play dead when injured or cornered.[48]

The possible species that the Moche depicted for vultures are *Cathartes aura* (Turkey Vulture, also known as gallinazo), *Sarcoramphus papa* (King Vulture), and *Coragyps atratus* (Black Vulture). All vultures are generally large birds of prey, with

[47] There are at least thirteen scenes with vultures or condors in the fineline painting corpus.
[48] Benson, *Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America*, 87-88.

mostly black or brown plumage and featherless heads and necks. They have long, broad wings and straight tails that allow them to soar. The eyes are small and the beaks are slightly hooked, used more for tearing rotting flesh than living prey. They mainly feed on carcasses and garbage, but can feed on different things depending on their location and the weather conditions.[49] The condor is the Andean condor, *Vultur gryphus*. Condors are much larger than other vultures, with a nearly ten foot wingspan. They have all black bodies, with a fringe of white feathers around the neck, and a bald neck and head. Condors can take food alive and dead, while vultures can usually only feed on dead prey. Although usually associated with the high Andes, some condor colonies inhabit the Peruvian and Chilean coasts.[50]

Vulture and Condor Categories

Identifying naturalistic representations of vultures and condors is not always easy, as they often look similar to Falconidae. The main context for vultures and condors is shown on fineline paintings, but is more common in sculptural form: vultures tearing apart the flesh of a human, shown in Figure 61. In this image, the large bird in the center is likely a condor, as it has the large characteristic caruncle. It possesses a human arm which holds a vessel, and the meaning of this is unknown. Figure 62 shows a similar scene, with a human being attacked by four vultures. It is unclear if the person is alive or already dead.

[49] Jon Fjeldså and Niels Krabbe, *Birds of the High Andes* (Copenhagen: Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, 1990), 88.
[50] Ibid.

Condors also often appear as headdresses on a variety of figures. In Figure 63, human figures playing pan pipes and surrounded by lima beans wear condor headdresses. In Figure 47, the anthropomorphic figure simply known as ‘Iguana’ is wearing a condor headdress. Although the significance of this headdress is unclear, it is often worn by Iguana. Similar to belts like the one worn by Wrinkle Face that end with snake-fox heads, the creature that they are fighting appears to be wearing a belt terminating in condor heads. Such figures are identified as condors because they have raptorial bird beaks with caruncles. Ducks also have caruncles, but their beaks are shaped very differently. The frequency and meaning of different animals depicted in headdresses is interesting and warrants further study, but unfortunately cannot be delved into here.

Vultures and condors are very rarely shown anthropomorphically in painting. In sculpture there are more examples, including Figure 64. It is unclear what the meaning of this sculpture is, as the vulture does not appear to be engaged in any particular action. Figure 65 shows a warrior that is not clearly identifiable, with a condor-like head, non-diagnostic wings and tail, and a human body. The head contains the characteristic small eyes and hooked beak with caruncle that we see in other depictions of condors, but the spiky plumes on top of its head are more like those of an osprey. If the figure is an osprey, there are several similar examples and the connection to warfare is well established. If the figure is a condor, it is the only representation—to my knowledge—of an anthropomorphic condor or vulture in the fineline painting corpus, and not as closely linked with warfare in Moche iconography.

Figure 41, with details in 41b, shows one of at least three scenes in which anthropomorphic bird figures appear, always rendered in the same way. These figures

have non-diagnostic bird heads and bird wings with human bodies. They wear a black garment with a white belt, and have a ring of white around the neck. The five figures in the upper register are more separated from the rest of the action, and some are holding textiles. The two figures in the lower register are holding jars are interacting with, or perhaps attending to, deceased people.[51] Given their association with death, these figures are most likely vultures. The white ring around the neck probably corresponds to the lighter ring of feathers around the necks of several species of vultures. The most likely interpretation is that these figures are anthropomorphic vultures who aid in the preparation of dead bodies, cleaning and sanitizing dead flesh as vultures actually do in nature.

[51] These human beings might be identified as live prisoners, but given their nudity and posture it seems more likely that they are dead, possibly sacrificed individuals.

Other Birds

There are several depictions of birds in Moche fineline paintings that are not easily identifiable or do not appear often enough to be separated into categories. Several species of water birds are depicted in Moche art in both painting and sculpture. Some can be identified by genus, but others are non-diagnostic. For sea birds, some of the species represented by the Moche include what is known as the guano group, the guanay cormorant *Phalacrocora bougainvillii*, the Peruvian booby *Sula variegata*, and the Peruvian/Chilean pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis thagus.* The droppings of these birds, known as guano, are used by Peruvians as an important source of fertilizer and fuel, although it is unclear if the Moche depicted them for this reason.[52] Other sea bird species include the Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxi*, the Gull *Larus dominicanus*, and the Inca Tern *Sterna Inca.*[53]

Inland water birds include egrets, herons, and ibises such as the Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, *Nycticorax nycticorax naevius*, *Ardea egretta*, the Snowy Egret *Ardea candidissima*, and the White Ibis *Guara alba.*[54] In De Bock's work on classifying species, he makes a special category for the heron, which he identifies in depictions by its neck bent into an S-shape, the feathers on top of its head, and its usual associations with lagoon animals and plants. He claims that the "prestige" of the heron was probably connected to its daily flight from the valley to the coastal lagoons, which can be related to

[52] Benson, *Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America*, 76.
[53] Lavallée, *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica,* 56-57. Additionally, Larco identifies several other species including another pelican *Pelecanus molinae,* another heron Phalacrocorax brasilianus, and the Petrel *Thalassoeca glacialoides* in *Los Mochicas,* 166.
[54] Lavallée, *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica,* 56. Larco identifies several other species of inland water birds including the Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus,* the Coot *Fulicula atra,*

the sun's passage across the sky.[55] However, he gives little evidence to substantiate this claim iconographically, and seems to be relying on ethnographic analogy.

Categories

There are thirteen depictions of birds that can we can say with some degree of certainty are actually sea birds. Among these, eleven are naturalistic depictions. Figure 66 shows several species of sea birds and other ocean animals swarming a boat occupied by Wrinkle Face. This is probably a scene related to an El Niño event. During El Niño periods large amounts of fish die off and fierce competition among seabirds for dwindling food sources sometimes leads to birds scavenging fishing boats. Ten of the eleven naturalistic depictions feature a naturally rendered sea bird with at least one anthropomorphic figure, as shown in Figure 67. In these scenes the anthropomorphic being grasps the sea bird by the neck, and is in the act of decapitating the bird. These other anthropomorphic beings are usually either the character known as Wrinkle Face, or a being related to the ocean, such as anthropomorphic shells, shrimp or octopi. Occasionally a non-ocean being such as an anthropomorphic dragonfly will be shown holding a sea bird by the neck. An anthropomorphized sea bird is shown in Figure 61, in which a pelican has a human arm and holds a pot. Figure 68 shows the now familiar scene of the Sacrifice Ceremony, but instead of the typical owl participant, the anthropomorphized bird more closely resembles a cormorant.

Sandpipers such as *Numenius hudsonicus*, and *Macrodamphs griseus,* and Loons such as *Colimbus christatus* and *Colimbus minor,* in *Los Mochicas,* 166.

[55] Edward K. de Bock, *Moche: Gods, Warriors and Priests* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Spruyt, Van Mantgem and De Does, 1988), 89.

There are at least six representations of inland water birds that can be firmly identified. Of these, four are naturalistic representations of herons in scenes with fish and other animals. This is illustrated in Figure 69. There are two representations, Figures 70 and 71, which are less clearly identified. Figure 70 is a scene related to the sacrifice ceremony, with a prisoner with a rope around his neck, a goblet which likely contains his blood, and an owl figure. In the background are three birds (likely herons) that have war shields in their claws, reminiscent of scenes where hummingbirds fly around carrying shields. In Figure 71, a human battles a large, almost geometric figure with a long neck and beak that might be identified as a heron or a snowy egret, holding a club and shield.

While tropical birds appear several times in Moche ceramics, there is to my knowledge only one instance in the fineline paintings. Figure 72 shows two human figures engaged in some unknown activity with a parrot standing on the ground in one part, and another parrot shown on top of a vessel in the other part. Parrots in Moche art have been identified as the genus Forpus or the species *Amazona farinosa*.[56] This is the only painted representation of a parrot, although they do appear in ceramic sculpture and parrot bones have been found in at least one archaeological site.[57]

[56] Lavallée, *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica,* 62, and Benson, Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America, 73.
[57] Tombs A, B and 2 at Dos Cabezas, according to Christopher Donnan, who also found some ceramic sculptures of parrots at the site.

Non-Avian Winged Figures

In her book *Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America*, Benson has a section on anomalous animals, into which she has put bats. She states "Animals that do not fit conventional patterns in nature are thought to have special power. The bat is the only mammal that truly flies (other "flying" mammals only glide); the fact that a bat sleeps and sometimes eats hanging upside down makes it even stranger."[58] Bats are anomalous creatures in our classification system because they are mammals that fly. But we have no reason to think that the Moche had categories such as mammals and birds that lined up exactly with our taxonomic system. Bats may not have been anomalous for the Moche unless we assume that they classified animals exactly as we do.

In our modern Linnaean classification system, bats are mammals, dragonflies are insects and neither are birds. However, the Moche likely did not have the same biological classification system. They must have had their own taxonomic or classification system for the natural world, as all societies do, but we must not assume that it bore any resemblance to our own.[59] It is worth examining figures of bats and dragonflies to see if they are dealt with in the same way as birds. If so, we might postulate that Moche iconography was organized with a category of 'winged figures'.[60]

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[58] Benson, *Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America*, 52.

[59] Claude Lévi-Strauss's seminal work *The Savage Mind* (Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), deals extensively with this topic.

[60] Although I am dealing with insects in the form of dragonflies under the category of winged figures, I am not dealing with flies in this work. This is because there are only two extant representations with flies, and both of them have been discussed by other scholars. Bourget has done the most thorough treatment of flies, both in his chapter "Rituals of Sacrifice at Huaca de la Luna" in Moche Art and Archaeology, ed. Joanne Pillsbury (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) and his book *Sex, Death, and Sacrifice in Moche Religion and Visual Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

Bats

Bats appear only rendered anthropomorphically in the extant fineline painting corpus, never naturalistically.[61] With ceramic sculpture we find bats both naturalistic and anthropomorphic. The bats depicted in Moche art are in the Phyllostomidae family (New World leaf-nosed bats), and most are probably vampire bats. The species possibly depicted are *Desmodus rotundus*, *Diphylla ecaudata* (both vampire bats) and *Phyllostomus hastatus* (an omnivore).[62] It might be of interest here to note that the vampire bat species, both *Desmodus rotundus* and *Diphylla ecaudata*, have been known to feed on birds as well as other mammals, notably the barn owls in South America.[63]

Bats are easily recognized in Moche art. In painting they are always rendered anthropomorphically, with human arms and legs. The torso, wings and head of the creatures are bat-like, the exception is the bat in Figure 3 which has a more human-like torso. The wings are not at all similar to the typical wings of bird species, illustrated in Figure 73. The wings can take a variety of shapes, some with curlicues and all with some type of geometric decoration that is probably meant to mimic the bone structure of bats in nature (because the actual species do not have decoration on their wings). The torsos of bats, shown in Figure 74, seem to be showing that they are wearing tunics decorated in a variety of patterns. The heads of bats, shown in Figure 75, all have the same basic shape and strongly resemble fox heads (an example is shown in Figure 76) with their elongated

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[61] There are at least four fineline painting scenes with bats.
[62] Lavallée, *Les Représentations Animales dans la Céramique Mochica,* 71. Larco notes that mostly the bats are reduced to theogonic (relating to origins and genealogical accounts of the gods) idealizations in *Los Mochicas,* 160.
[63] Alfred Gardner, *Mammals of South America, 1: Marsupials, Xenarthrans, Shrews, and Bats*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 221, 224.

snouts and sharp teeth, and they even have the tongue sticking out of the mouth that is found in many depictions of foxes.

Bat Categories

There are only four extant scenes of bats rendered in the fineline painting corpus, shown in Figures 3, 77, 79 and 80, so it is difficult to get a sense of categories and patterns for these beings. Figure 3 and the detail 3d is clearly a running scene, and the bat is just one more participant. The bat does not appear in any other running scenes (to my knowledge). Figure 77 is a scene of the Sacrifice Ceremony, although it deviates slightly from the scenes illustrated in Figures 2a and 59, because it seems to be pared down to its most basic elements. The bat figure is cutting the throat of a human victim and collecting the blood that is spraying everywhere. It seems appropriate to have a bat cut the throat of a victim to collect the blood. Benson emphasizes this blood-letting and decapitating quality for bats in Moche art in her article "Bats in South American Iconography" where she talks about *Desmodus rotundus* that bite at their victim's necks (as well as other body parts), and larger bats that crush the skulls or bite off the heads of their insect prey. She states that "Bats, in general, have many qualifications for sacrificial, death-associated, chthonic symbolism."[64] In Figure 78 a bat appears in another Sacrifice Ceremony scene, the now-destroyed Mural E from Pañamarca, where it holds a goblet presumably filled with human blood taken from a sacrifice. A fox and the priestess figure also hold goblets.

Figure 79 depicts a context that we have not seen with other winged figures. Two anthropomorphic bats are shown (depicted in a somewhat clumsy artistic manner)

[64] Elizabeth Benson, "Bats in South American Iconography," *Andean Past* I (1987): 169.

battling some kind of anthropomorphic creature that Donnan labels as "Split Top". Battles of this kind are not unusual between anthropomorphic creatures, but this is the only representation in which a winged figure appears. It is unclear what this particular battle signifies, but it seems likely that depictions of anthropomorphic creatures engaged in battle had a larger significance for the Moche, perhaps as a mythic narrative.

Figure 80 is also a context that is not found with other winged figures. The bat is shown standing among several different kinds of pottery vessels, and is not taking any clear action. The actual vessel itself shows a bat holding two vessels, which might be a clue to the nature of the scene in the fineline painting, but it is very unclear what the greater meaning and context of this scene is. Bourget has suggested that the bat is emptying the vessel, and is related to death and the theme of carrying funerary objects, likely offerings.[65] Figure 81 shows a similar ceramic with a bat holding two vessels, in the painted scene on the vessel there is a similar collection of containers, as well as some architectural renderings and different figures. The two leftmost figures appear to be humans with either severe wrinkles or facial scarification; the seated figures in the white robes appear to be anthropomorphic bats with human bodies. These figures have fox-like snouts and sharp teeth, and the third figure (farthest to the right) appears to have his tongue sticking out, as we see in other bat and fox depictions. The first and second figures have small curlicues around their backs reminiscent of bat wings. This scene might also be related to death and funerary offerings.

[65] Steve Bourget, *Sex, Death, and Sacrifice in Moche Religion and Visual Culture*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 58, 61.

While bats and other winged figures (as well as several other animals) share some of the same contexts such as running and Sacrifice Ceremony scenes, bats also appear in different contexts and are rendered differently from winged figures. Bats have more in common with foxes than birds, and were perhaps even classified within the same taxonomic group as foxes by the Moche. Based on my research, bats are not part of any larger group of winged figures within the Moche corpus.

Dragonflies

Dragonflies appear rendered both naturalistically and anthropomorphically in the fineline painting corpus. Despite the fact that we have at least ten different fineline painting scenes with dragonflies, scholars have mostly ignored these. Donnan has identified a few scenes with dragonflies, but has done no real analysis. Benson, in her book on animals in Latin American art, hardly mentions insects at all. Lavallée, in her book on animals in Moche iconography talks briefly about insects and arachnids, but does not discuss dragonflies in her section on naturally rendered animals. In a few instances Lavallée shows and describes images in which she has identified an anthropomorphic butterfly, but she allows that these might also be dragonflies, which is the interpretation I think is most valid.[66]

Because no Moche scholars have really analyzed dragonflies, there is not even a basic description of characteristics and behaviors. There are thousands of species of dragonflies in the New World, so identifying individual species or even genera is most likely not a worthwhile task. Dragonflies as an order (Odonata, along with damselflies) have long bodies with four many-veined wings, bulbous eyes, six legs that cannot function for walking but serve instead to capture prey, and two small, bristle-like antennae. According to Hogue:

[66] In her section on naturally rendered insects, Lavallée only mentions the butterfly, and in her images she shows a naturally rendered figure that is clearly a butterfly, with four legs, a relatively short body and a large wing (shown in profile) that could not have been confused with the smaller and narrower wings (at least two are always shown) that dragonflies are shown with. For anthropomorphic beings, it is clear to me that they are dragonflies because of the very different wings, yet Lavallée identifies such creatures as being likely butterflies but possibly dragonflies.

> Dragonflies are highly opportunistic predators that hunt singly or sometimes in aggregations, taking other aquatic insects flying over still water ponds, marshes, and the margins of lakes and streams. Their aerial acrobatics are spectacular; they can hover, dart forward instantly, and even fly backward with consummate ease and speed, feats rivaled by few other aerial creatures.[67]

In the fineline painting corpus, dragonflies can be identified on the basis of their wings and antennae. Figure 45 shows a dragonfly functioning as an indicator. Each dragonfly has two wings, or possibly two sets of wings. In general the number of wings is variable. Depictions that we can identify as dragonflies can have two, four, five or six wings. Obviously four wings signals the actual number of wings of the insect, and two wings signals the wings in profile. When we have depictions of five or six wings, it seems likely that we are being shown wings in rapid flight, perhaps some kind of semiotic marker of the speed of the insect. The wings can be decorated or all black. The antennae curl up, which we see emphasized in many different depictions of dragonflies. When rendered anthropomorphically, as in Figure 3e, the wings are very similar and the antennae are still present; sometimes the insect tails are present, sometimes not.

Dragonfly categories

Figure 45 shows dragonflies associated with hummingbirds and warfare. There are no other extant scenes of dragonflies as indicators. Dragonflies as actors appear in many more scenes and contexts. In Figure 15 there are several bird beings, as well as

[67] Charles Hogue, Charles. *Latin American Insects and Entomology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 197.

what might be a dragonfly warrior. He has an insect tail, and wings that are very dragonfly-like. This depiction notably is missing the swirling antennae that other dragonfly depictions have. It is unclear what he really is, but dragonfly seems to be the likeliest identification. Figure 82 shows an anthropomorphic dragonfly along with two owls and a being that might be a feline, engaged in the "Bean and Stick Game" that I discussed earlier.

Another context for dragonfly actors is illustrated in at least two images, Figures 83 and 84. These two scenes show dragonflies grasping the necks of naturalistically rendered birds. In Figure 83 the dragonfly holds a tumi knife, and this perhaps is meant to indicate that he is acting as a sacrificer, and will decapitate the snowy egret. Interestingly, Golte has classified these two images, along with the dragonfly in Figure 82, under the broad category of a fanged being that he labels God F. In this category there are beings that are clearly very different, such as figures resembling Wrinkle Face, anthropomorphic octopi and anthropomorphic crabs.[68] There are several other anthropomorphic figures that grasp birds by the neck, and such scenes are usually shown by themselves on vessels, not as part of a bigger event. Many of these other scenes have to do with ocean contexts, the grasping figures are often anthropomorphic sea creatures such as crabs or octopi, and the birds being grasped are water birds (although there are no good species or genus indicators for the birds in these scenes). Figures 83 and 84 must be related to the larger theme of decapitation usually performed by Wrinkle Face.

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[68] Jürgen Golte, *Iconos Y Narraciones* (Lima: IEP, 1994), 90. Curiously, although Golte is following what were originally Lieske's categories of figures, Lieske's God F does not include any representations of dragonflies or any other anthropomorphic animals, and is limited to similarly depicted figures with serpent belts. Barbel Lieske, *Mythische Bilderzählungen in Den Gefäßmalereien Der Altperuanischen Moche-Kultur*, (Bonn: Holos, 1992), 44-49.

The last and most significant category for dragonflies is as runners. Figures 3, 85 and 86 show this, although there are other vessels with similar depictions. In all of the running scenes, they are shown with a large number of other anthropomorphic animals, never by themselves or in groups smaller than four. They are most commonly shown with hummingbirds, foxes and felines.

Out of all the animals, the dragonfly is shown most often with the hummingbird (although the hummingbird is not shown most often with the dragonfly, but with the hawk). I argue that this connection is because of the very similar flight capabilities and levels of aggression exhibited by these two animals. Both are able to hover, dart forward quickly, and fly backwards. Hummingbirds attack offensively to defend territory, while dragonflies mostly attack offensively to catch prey, although they can also defend territory and in fact "Dragonflies are often the dominant aerial predators at ponds or stream environments, and are often seen hawking over fields, trails, or defending a territory at streams or ponds."[69] Given this information, it makes sense that dragonflies have similar contexts and are closely linked to hummingbirds in contexts involving running and warfare. Although the Moche clearly did not depict dragonflies as birds, they have almost all of the same contexts and at least within the fineline painting corpus dragonflies always appear with birds. I cannot conclusively say whether or not dragonflies should be categorized in the same way as birds, but the associations are too strong not to acknowledge.

[69] Rosser Garrison et al., *Dragonfly Genera of the New World* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 1.

Chapter 2: Semiotic Analysis

In the previous chapter I identified the winged figures and determined the kinds of scenes they appeared in and the actions they were performing. Now I will explore and define the possibility of winged figures as semiotic markers that I have been suggesting throughout this thesis. With an understanding of these contexts, along with a firm grasp of the characteristics and behaviors of the species themselves, we can arrive at some deeper understandings of the semiological nature of Moche art, and how these figures function within it.

Most of the research analyzing the semiotic nature of Moche art has dealt exclusively with hummingbirds, so I will start there. Scholars have posited, quite convincingly, that indicator hummingbirds in scenes of warfare and running have some kind of symbolic significance. In his 1978 book on Moche art, Donnan states that hummingbirds function as "artistic adverbs" in Moche iconography, indicating the speed at which an event is taking place.[70] Simon Martin (although primarily a Maya and not a Moche scholar) builds on Donna's earlier assertions and characterizes Moche hummingbirds as "symbols"- "supplementing the scene with data that amplifies the nature or character of activity involved." He goes on to say that "hummingbirds in flight appear almost exclusively in scenes of combat and running where they would denote the

[70] Christopher Donnan, *Moche Art of Peru: Pre-Columbian Symbolic Communication* (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, 1978), 8.

intensity of the action. As visual metaphors, with no intrinsic role in pictorial space, they are apparently informants of a purely semasiographic kind."[71]

Hocquenghem has made several arguments regarding the semiotic nature of hummingbirds. She posits that the hummingbird was probably regarded as a spirit protector of warriors, which explains the frequency of its representations as figures carrying weapons.[72] She also argues that hummingbirds in Moche art are not metaphorical, but metonymic. She explains this by saying that when hummingbirds are depicted they are not meant to represent the actual birds or to connote some relationship with the landscape, but rather they stand for the complex of qualities associated with a hummingbird. These qualities are small and light bodies, agility and the ability to penetrate flowers with great accuracy.[73]

In the Moche corpus there are representations of the birds flying among human runners or warriors, exemplified by Figure 23. For such scenes there are two distinct interpretive possibilities. The first is that these scenes are not meant to correspond with the "natural" human world (as modern viewers are likely to conceptualize it), and are perhaps taking place in some kind of mythical or "supernatural" realm. There certainly

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[71] Simon Martin, "On Pre-Columbian Narrative: Representation Across the Word-Image Divide," in *A Pre-Columbian World*, eds. Jeffrey Quilter and Mary Ellen Miller (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library & Collection, 2006), 72.

[72] She goes on to say that one cannot help make the connection with Aztec mythology, where the great god of war was Huitzilopochtli, 'hummingbird on the left' and the hummingbirds were the souls of warriors killed in combat, and reincarnated as this form after four years. Hoquenghem, *Iconografía Mochica*, 136. Translation mine. Although Hocquenghem makes this assertion with regard to hummingbirds, it should be noted that while hummingbirds are directly linked to Huitzilopochtli (even his name translates to this), butterflies are the animals more commonly associated with warriors in general in Aztec culture.

[73] Anne Marie Hocquenghem and Andras Sandor, "Metonymy over Metaphor: Interpretations of Moche Humming Birds," in *Andine Archaeologie- Arqueología Andina II*, ed. Anne Marie Hocquenghem (Berlin: Lateinamerika Institut, 1982), 358.

are scenes in which hummingbirds are interspersed among beings with supernatural attributes engaged in warfare, such as Figure 47. However, the fact that birds appear among humans leads me to believe that this first interpretation is not the correct one. If we accepted the first interpretation, we would have to admit that all scenes with human beings are taking place in some kind of mythical or "supernatural" realm, and the Moche never tried to replicate their "natural" world or historical events.

The second possibility for scenes with hummingbirds as indicators in warfare or running is that these birds are symbolic. This is a much more feasible interpretation. Although giving slightly different interpretations, all Moche scholars addressing the issue of hummingbirds have agreed that representations of the birds flying among human runners or warriors are not meant to communicate that these were real events with birds flying around. Hummingbirds had to have some kind of symbolic quality, unless we are willing to believe that they swarmed Moche battlefields and flew around warriors, prisoners or runners. Given this premise, I would like to explore the symbolic qualities of hummingbirds, and then address some possible symbolic qualities of other winged figures in Moche art.

Semiotics—the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior—is a field of study in and of itself, so there is no unanimous agreement on theories and structures in the field. My goal here is not a discussion of semiotic theory for its own sake; I wish to use the concept of the sign as a methodological exercise in trying to find possible explanations for meanings in Moche art. This kind of exercise will not lead to any concrete conclusions about meaning, but is rather a different way of looking at the problem. We, in our modern western culture, can say that the Moche must have

associated the natural behavior of the hummingbird with depictions of the bird, so therefore hummingbirds are symbols of those behaviors. This may have been the case, but because of the arbitrariness of signs in general (for example, what does the word "tree" have to do with an actual tree?), and the cultural differences when dealing with ancient, non-western societies, we can never be one hundred percent certain of the meanings of signs.

For the purposes of this chapter I will mostly be employing the semiotic classifications of the philosopher and scientist Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce states:

> There are three kinds of signs. Firstly, there are *likenesses*, or icons; which serve to convey ideas of the things they represent simply by imitating them. Secondly, there are indications, or *indices*; which show something about things, on account of their being physically connected with them…Thirdly, there are *symbols*, or general signs, which have become associated with their meanings by usage.[74]

Icons generally convey the idea of things through "realistic" or "naturalistic" depictions of them. Moche art is seemingly made up of mostly icons, because we are able to recognize individual species of animals. However a "realistic" or "naturalistic" representation of an animal does not mean that the intent of the artist was to communicate that the animal was really there. For example, a picture of an elephant can be an icon, meant to represent a real elephant. Or it could be a symbol; in our culture a picture of an elephant often represents a political party, and is not an evocation of the actual animal. An index is physically connected to the thing it represents; it is caused by, or part of that

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74 Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, eds., *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 5.

which it indicates. For example, a cough is an index of a cold. An index does not need to have any visual similarity or connection to the thing it indicates. The third category is symbols; for Peirce, "a symbol is connected with its object by virtue of the symbol-using mind."[75]

I think this classification into three types of signs is helpful for considering meaning in Moche art. I argue that indicator winged figures are not iconic, because scenes in which hummingbirds, hawks or dragonflies appear are not signifying that the actual birds were flying among men during races or battles. According to Donnan, Moche artists rarely attempted to accurately represent the natural world; instead they seemed to focus on what had ritual value.[76] It is possible that indicator figures could be indices; for example they could index the environment in which the scene is taking place. This is interesting, but there is not enough room to fully analyze this idea within the space of this thesis. This idea would require a thorough analysis of all the environments and corresponding figures and actions in the Moche corpus.

It seems more likely (and even more interesting) that representations of indicator hummingbirds are symbols rather than icons or indices following Peirce's classification. Most Moche scholars argue (and I concur) that representations of hummingbirds are symbols of the qualities of the actual bird. These qualities are being small, light and agile, yet territorial and aggressive. They also possess superior flying capabilities: being able to fly extremely fast, fly backwards, hover and dart forward almost instantaneously. It is

[75]Houser and Kloesel, *The Essential Peirce*, 9.
[76] Christopher Donnan, *Moche Art and Iconography* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1976), 130.

possible that different contexts and scenes evoked different qualities. For example, in scenes of running hummingbirds might indicate speed, while in scenes of warfare the birds might indicate aggressiveness. But it seems likely that Moche representations of hummingbirds indicate—in that they evoke and symbolize—the qualities that the actual birds possessed and were doubtless observed by the Moche.

If we allow for the possibility of indicator hummingbirds as abstract symbols, then it follows that other figures in Moche art could also stand for other meanings and concepts. I will continue to focus on winged figures, but there are certainly other characters that this kind of exercise can be applied to. Hummingbirds are closely associated with hawks and dragonflies, not only in the number of depictions they appear in together, but also in the contexts in which all three are found. As stated earlier in this paper, there are several scenes with indicator hawks and hummingbirds in scenes with humans fighting or running. Hawk and hummingbird actors also participate in scenes of fighting and running along with other beings such as foxes and felines. As part of a semiotic exercise, we should entertain the idea that the association between hawks and hummingbirds is informed by the natural behaviors of the birds. In the wild both families of birds are powerful and highly maneuverable flyers and hummingbirds will often dive-bomb hawks who invade their territory.

Perhaps the Moche interpreted this natural behavior as the two animals doing battle with each other, and applied this analogy to human battles. Running scenes, which need to be analyzed more thoroughly by Moche scholars, are related to warfare scenes and often the characters in each have similar attributes. The fact that the birds are not fighting each other directly—and in scenes where they are anthropomorphized even seem

to be working together—might negate this hypothesis. But that fact that we cannot see a one to one correspondence does not mean that this is not valid idea on some level.

Lévi-Strauss strongly argues that humans cross-culturally think of the bird world as a metaphorical human society, and there are countless examples in mythology and folklore that speak to the frequency of this mode of representation. He explains this by stating that:

> [Birds are] permitted to resemble men for the very reason that they are so different. They are feathered, winged, oviparous [meaning they produce eggs that hatch outside the body of the mother] and they are also physically separated from human society by the element in which it is their privilege to move. As a result of this fact, they form a community which is independent of our own but, precisely because of this independence, appears to us like another society, homologous to that in which we live: birds love freedom; they build themselves homes in which they live a family life and nurture their young; they often engage in social relations with other members of their species; and they communicate with them by acoustic means recalling articulated language.[77]

Lévi-Strauss concludes by saying that birds are metaphorical human beings. I think it is interesting and perhaps helpful to think about Moche art as being the vehicle for Moche ideas about society and the animal world.

A different kind of relationship is being displayed with representations of dragonflies and hummingbirds. While I would argue that the connection between hawks

[77] Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, 204.

and hummingbirds is primarily related to warfare and how hummingbirds will attack hawks in the wild, the connection between dragonflies and hummingbirds is primarily due to their similarities. Both are able to hover, dart forward quickly, and fly backwards. Hummingbirds attack defensively for their territory, while dragonflies mostly attack offensively to catch prey, although they can also defend territory. Dragonfly warriors and runners are almost always represented with hummingbird warriors and runners (although hummingbirds appear many times without dragonflies). It is possible that the Moche were trying to create an analogy between dragonflies and hummingbirds, by showing hummingbirds often with dragonflies and having the two appear in very similar contexts and positions within images. We can interpret dragonflies as having similar symbolic qualities.

Semiotics and Anthropomorphic Figures

It is relatively straightforward to say that indicator hummingbirds serve no purpose and only dart around in scenes of warfare and running, and that they are actually representations of the qualities that the actual birds possessed. However, when we consider depictions of hummingbirds as actors (which are almost always anthropomorphic), the interpretation is different. In my previous discussions of anthropomorphic winged figures, I have only stated their contexts and interactions with other figures, while purposefully avoiding saying what their meanings are. I think that we will never know for certain what these kinds of representations signify, but we can make some educated guesses, especially with the help of a semiotic approach.

Some of the earlier Moche scholars, notably Gerdt Kutscher, and Bärbel Lieske (with Jürgen Golte following his paradigm), posited that many of the anthropomorphic actors in Moche art are gods. Lieske developed a widely followed scheme by grouping all of the same (or in some cases similar but not precisely the same) representations of certain characters and labeled them as "God A", "God B" etcetera. For example, God G was an anthropomorphic owl. Golte, using Lieske's study, changed some of the god figure categories into beings that he did not strictly label as "gods". For example hummingbirds went from being "gods" to "assistants" (ayudantes). Kutscher was a scholar who also worked with ancient Maya civilization, which likely influenced his view of anthropomorphic characters as gods or easily classifiable supernatural beings. Elizabeth Benson and Yuri Berezkin also freely labeled many beings as gods.[78] Some

[78] Lieske, *Mythische Bilderzählungen in Den Gefäßmalereien Der Altperuanischen Moche-Kultur*, 14-15.

scholars such as Donnan distanced themselves from such contentious identifications of anthropomorphic characters, labeling them simply “Figures”. Bourget uses the phrase “beings with supernatural attributes” which seems to be the most descriptive without imposing a concept of sacredness on these characters.

The truth is we have no idea whether these anthropomorphic actors are gods or “supernatural” in any way, or whether the term ‘supernatural’ has any real meaning when dealing with the Moche culture. In this section I will elaborate on what these figures might be, and how we can interpret some examples in the corpus. There are several possibilities for what anthropomorphic characters are supposed to represent. The three main possibilities are that they are humans in costume, “supernatural” beings (or beings that possess some level of supernatural attributes), or personifications of abstract concepts. Of course, these are not strict categories and it is possible that the Moche conceptualized anthropomorphic characters as being some combination of all three. I will simply expand upon what these possibilities might mean, and the evidence we have for each. I will focus on anthropomorphized bird, bat and dragonfly actors, although the possibilities and meanings are very similar for other kinds of anthropomorphized figures.

The Costume Argument

There is some evidence for actual Moche people costuming themselves as winged figures. This is best illustrated by Tomb Two at Sipan, shown in Figure 37a, where the deceased has a large headdress in the form of an owl head and wings. There is much debate over whether this is “costuming” or not. It is unclear whether the intention with such a headdress was to mimic or perform as an owl, or simply to have a headdress with owl attributes (because the person liked owls, it was a family crest, or any other number

of reasons). Regardless, it is hard not to draw parallels with representations such as Figure 15d, which almost certainly shows a man dressed as a hummingbird. The body is human, and the figure seems to be wearing wings and a tail, but in contrast with other anthropomorphic representations, the face is also human, and he holds a reed or other flat object in his mouth to mimic the beak of the hummingbird. If it were a "supernatural being" or an allegory, it would make less sense for this figure to have a human face. Perhaps this figure is a visual clue like a symbol key on an atlas that lets us the viewers know that all the figures in the scene are also human beings costumed and performing as animals. In other words, many of the anthropomorphic beings might be humans in costume, even if we only have one or two representations that seem to indicate this.

If this figure is a human being costumed as a hummingbird, it is possible that some or all depictions of anthropomorphic winged figures are actually humans dressed as—and possibly acting like—the animals represented. If we allow for this premise, the interpretation is still unclear, but it likely signifies that what is being represented is a ceremony or play. Perhaps specific religious or mythic rituals were performed involving different species of animals, or perhaps there were festivals or parades in which participants costumed themselves. It may have been connected with the concept of costuming as a way of gaining some of the power of whatever you were costumed as. Perhaps in dressing up like a hummingbird, one could gain some of its attributes, like speed and aggressiveness. Perhaps it was not just ritual performance but actual races and battles that were undertaken in costume. The idea of costuming might raise more questions than it answers, but it is nonetheless important to consider for this type of representation.

The “Supernatural” Argument

The second possibility for anthropomorphic animals is that they are “supernatural” beings. However, there is no way for us to qualify this. There may have been a scale of supernatural qualities ranging from omniscient deity to slightly more than human. They might have been beings that inhabit the human world at all times and are invisible or liminal; beings that inhabit something akin to an underworld or heavenly world; or something in between, perhaps humans possessed or animated by some kind of “supernatural” power. For example, there is evidence that certain figures were closely associated with death; Bourget has argued that owls were closely linked with death and the carrying of the soul to the underworld.[79] Perhaps anthropomorphic owls were “supernatural” creatures that were thought of as living in some kind of underworld, and assisting the newly dead people making the journey.

There is no real visual evidence for these actors as supernatural creatures, aside from the actual anthropomorphization. These representations by and large show human bodies (arms, legs and torsos) with heads of animals, and often other vestigial attributes such as wings, tails, antennae, shells or tentacles. Sometimes inanimate objects are anthropomorphized, with a common example being animated warfare implements such as war clubs, shields, and helmets shown in Figure 87. Plant life such as Lima beans is also commonly anthropomorphized, such as in Figure 53. If they are not humans dressed in costume, then they might very well be supernatural creatures with superhuman strength and other attributes. Humans are very rarely shown with these anthropomorphic

[79] See Bourget, "Los Raptores De Almas”.

depictions, which can mean a number of things. Figure 1 is a rare example, where anthropomorphic figures carry what seem to be humans in litters (although it is possible that they are not fully human). Another exception is scenes of the Sacrifice Ceremony, shown in Figure 2a, where human victims get their throats cut and anthropomorphic beings carry the blood in cups.

In using the word 'supernatural' I often put it in quotation marks because that word is often used without any real understanding or explanation of its meaning and greater implications. The idea of "supernatural" beings implies that there is a natural world and then something else—not necessarily a heaven or a hell—but spaces, objects and beings that do not fit into the normal, everyday world. But what constitutes this other super or sub natural category is based completely on cultural definitions of what the natural world consists of. We have no idea if the Moche had a concept of the supernatural. It might be that for the Moche, everything they depicted, including anthropomorphic beings of all kinds, were as real as human beings and existed in their natural world. Claude Lévi-Strauss in his book *The Savage Mind* explains this:

> The beings which native thought endows with significance are seen as exhibiting a certain affinity with man. The Ojibwa believe in a universe of supernatural beings:
>
> Yet to call these beings supernatural slightly misinterprets the Indians' conception. They are a part of the natural order of the universe no less than man himself, whom they resemble in the possession of intelligence and emotion. Like man, too, they are male or female, and in some cases at least may even have families of their own. Some are tied down to define localities, some move from

> place to place at will; some are friendly to Indians, others hostile (Jenness 2, p. 29).[80]

Lévi-Strauss in a later section describes his thoughts on the difference between magic and religion, where he states, "The notion of a supernature exists only for a humanity which attributes supernatural power to itself and in return ascribes the powers of its superhumanity to nature."[81] The term "supernatural" is perhaps the best one to use for the sake of simplicity, but we must always remember that something might not necessarily be "supernatural" but is instead perfectly natural for a different society.

If we interpret anthropomorphic figures in Moche art as "supernatural" then the possibilities are almost endless as to whether they are gods, demigods, or any number of non-natural characters that we find in other world religions. Using this term does seem to connote that they are religious or mythical creatures of some kind, although we do not have enough information about Moche religious or mythic beliefs to explain this any further. Broadly interpreting anthropomorphic beings as "supernatural" without specifying what this might mean can be unhelpful and disingenuous, nevertheless the possibility always remains that these are "supernatural", perhaps even godlike creatures. If for example an anthropomorphic bat is "supernatural", such a creature would likely have some of the important attributes of the bat: physical features such as bat wings, large ears, snout and fangs. Such a being would also likely possess behavioral characteristics such as drinking blood from larger victims and decapitating smaller victims (like

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[80] Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, 37, (Quoting D. Jenness "The Ojibwa Indians of Parry Island. Their Social and Religious Life,' Bulletins of the Canada Department of Mines, National Museum of Canada, no. 78, Ottawa 1935.)

[81] Lévi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, 221.

different species of bats do with prey like cattle and insects respectively). It seems likely that such a creature would also have other attributes, behaviors, stories, and mythology that are not apparent to us in the visual record, but would have been well known by Moche artists and audiences. Characterizing anthropomorphic figures in Moche art as 'beings with supernatural attributes' seems like an effective way to communicate that they were more than human without regard to whether they were actually considered sacred or not by the Moche. But there is one more interpretive possibility for these anthropomorphic figures.

The Symbolic Argument

The third possibility for the anthropomorphic depictions is that they are personifications or symbols of abstract concepts. Because it seems likely that winged figures as indicators have a strong correlation with the natural behaviors and characteristics of the animals, it also seems likely that winged figures as actors (if we interpret them as symbolic) also have a connection with the natural behaviors and characteristics. In other words, a hummingbird actor might be the personification of the qualities of the hummingbird, such as speed, aggressiveness and flight maneuverability. However, it is also possible that actors are personifications of something else entirely, perhaps relating to cultural myths and history.

As with the "supernatural" interpretation, the symbolic interpretation has no real visual evidence. To entertain this interpretation, we can simply view some or all depictions of anthropomorphic figures as being embodiments of ideas or concepts. It would certainly be possible to interpret all winged figures (and other animals for that

matter) as allegories of the natural behaviors of the animals, although this is perhaps too simplistic. Once we allow the possibility of this interpretation, what such anthropomorphic figures actually symbolize can be varied.

In addition to hummingbirds, there are several other winged figures that we can interpret as being symbolic in nature. Duck actors might embody the behaviors of the bird, such as the way they fly or their skills in capturing fish. These figures might also be a more specific reference to the tumi-knife shape of their beaks. Hawk and dragonfly actors, who appear often with hummingbirds, might embody the behaviors of the animals, such as their respective high levels of aggressiveness, territoriality and flight capabilities, or there might be a specific story or myth from the Moche culture that ties them together. Condor actors could embody the behaviors of condors, such as their supremacy in the skies, close associations with death, and hunting prowess. Bat actors might embody their natural behavior, such as their echolocation skills, the way some species hunt by decapitating insects or the way other species hunt by biting and draining the blood of larger victims. Owl actors might embody their natural behavior, such as their protection of agricultural fields or the way they sometimes decapitate and bloodlet prey.

It is also possible any or all of these figures might embody something else entirely that we have no way of understanding through the visual record. With these different semiotic exercises my goal has been to present some possibilities for interpreting winged figures as both actors and indicators, and to start suggesting some answers based on my own research. There are more possibilities for interpretation once the organization, attributes and contexts of winged figures are better understood.

Conclusion

I have divided depictions of winged figures into groups, on the basis of the family or order, which are ducks, hawks, owls, hummingbirds, vultures, other birds, and dragonflies. I analyzed bats and concluded that they do not share enough of the modes of representation and contexts to be firmly categorized with birds and dragonflies. There are certainly overlaps in terms of actions depicted and associated figures within these groups, as well as many images where figures from different groups appear together. However, as an organizational strategy these groups seem to be discreet and perhaps more importantly, manageable.

I have analyzed these depictions using semiotic methods; specifically I have dealt with birds and dragonflies when they indicate the natural qualities associated with these animals and seem to imbue the scene and the figures within it with these qualities. Scholars such as Donnan and Hocquenghem have suggested that hummingbirds might represent abstract concept such as speed.[82] I go even further to suggest that in addition to speed, representations of hummingbirds might connote aggressiveness, hunting prowess and skill in warfare. I have also analyzed winged figures as actors, the concept of anthropomorphization and the interpretive possibilities, which include the costume argument, the "supernatural" argument and the symbolic argument.

Throughout this thesis I have primarily looked at birds, bats and insects in fineline paintings, while occasionally referencing ceramic sculpture and other media. I have not done a complete analysis of all sculpture, wall murals, textiles or metalwork. While we

[82] See Donnan, *Moche Art and Iconography*, and Hocquenghem and Sandor, "Metonymy over Metaphor: Interpretations of Moche Humming Birds".

should not assume that there is no overlap in meaning across different media, we should also not assume that an animal or human figure has the exact same connotations and meanings in different media. For a thorough analysis scholars could establish contexts and meanings of winged figures within the confines of the ceramic assemblage, and then expand to other media.

There are other issues and details brought about by this analysis that warrant further study. For example, there are many diagnostic features of winged figures that are interesting. The difference in their tails might serve as another marker for different species, or might indicate something else entirely. For example, it is possible that the Moche represented specific characters in their art. Two actors in Figure 3, shown in detail 3a, appear to both be hummingbirds. It is possible that they signify different characters in a story, with their tails differentiating not between species but between personages. Another facet of Moche art that I have not paid as much attention to in this study is winged figures in headdresses. Their contexts and connotations, in conjunction with other animals depicted on headdresses both iconographically and archaeologically, would make a very interesting study.

Moche art is a new field of study with an expansive corpus that is now in museums and collections worldwide. The opportunities for scholarship are immense, and hopefully this thesis has contributed some foundations for the organization and analysis of this visual culture.

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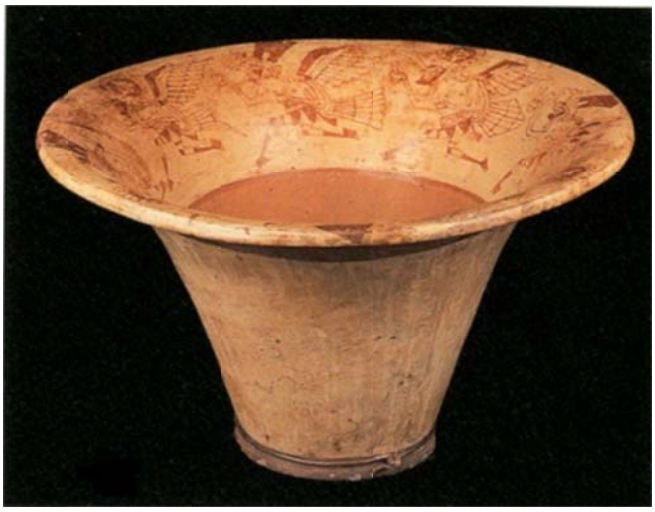
Figure 2b.Different fineline drawing, same original vessel as 2a.

Figure 2c.Different fineline drawing, same original vessel as 2a.



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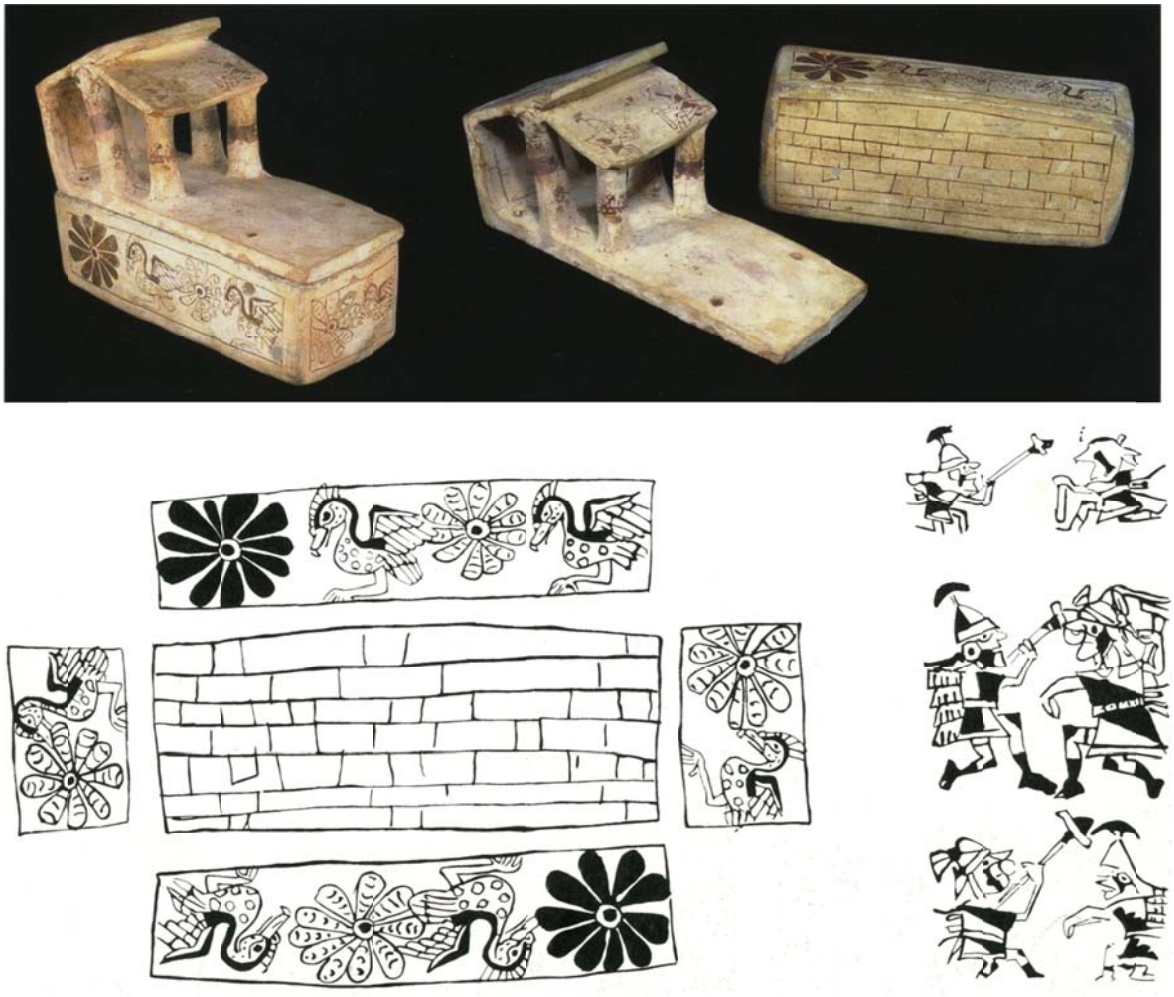

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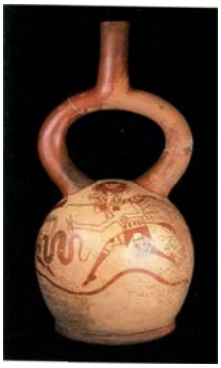

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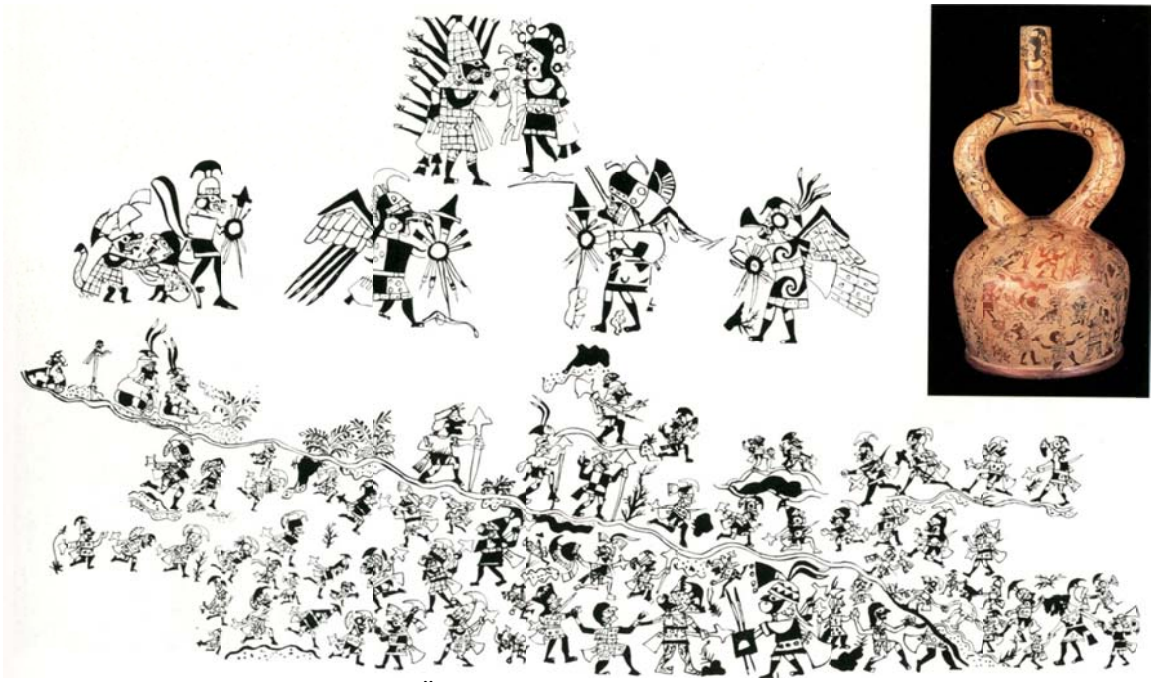

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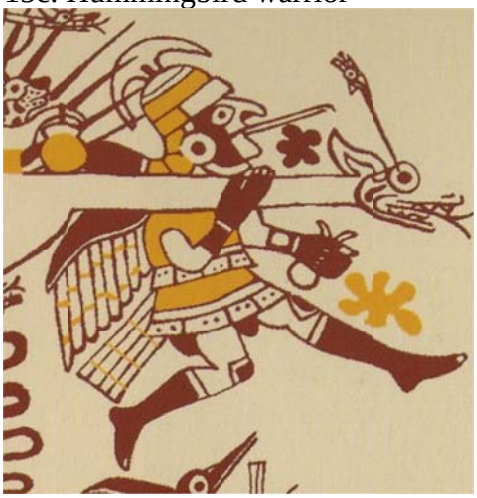

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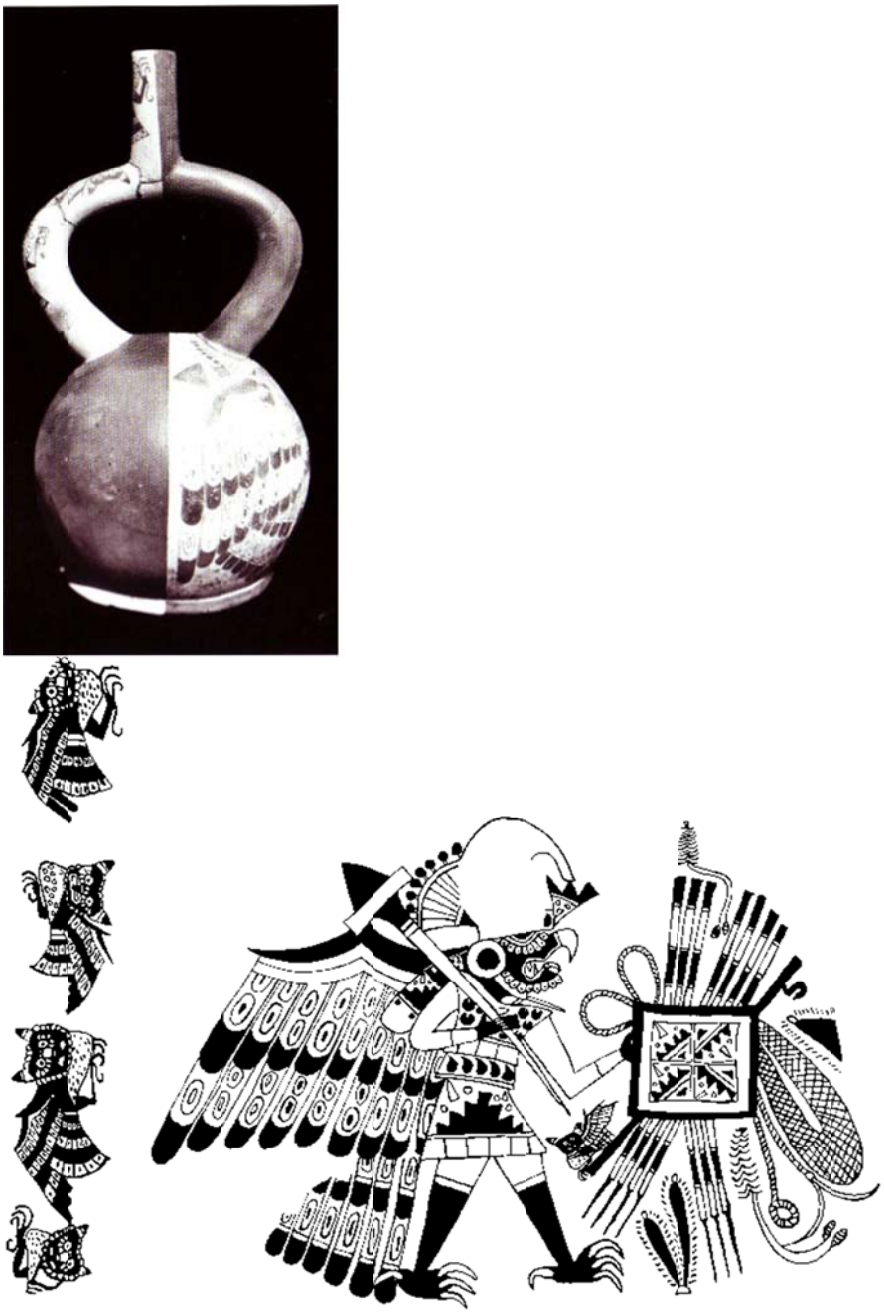

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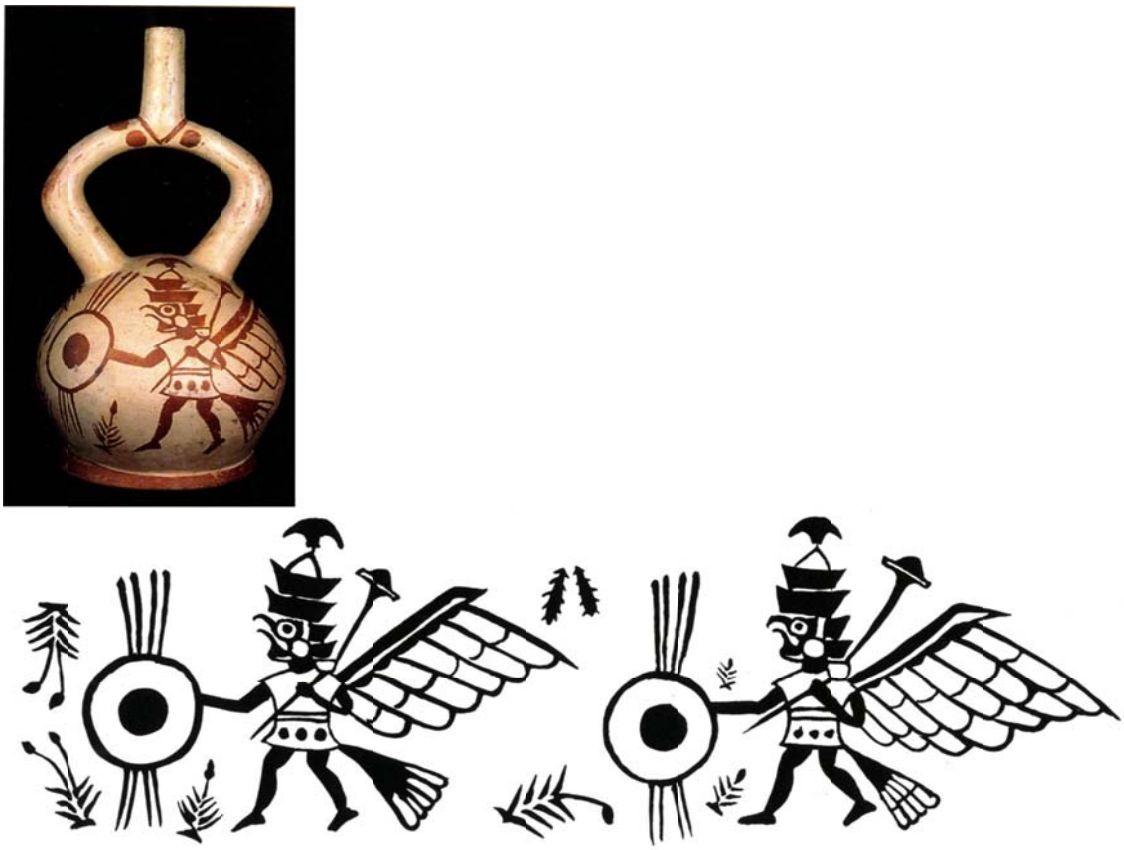

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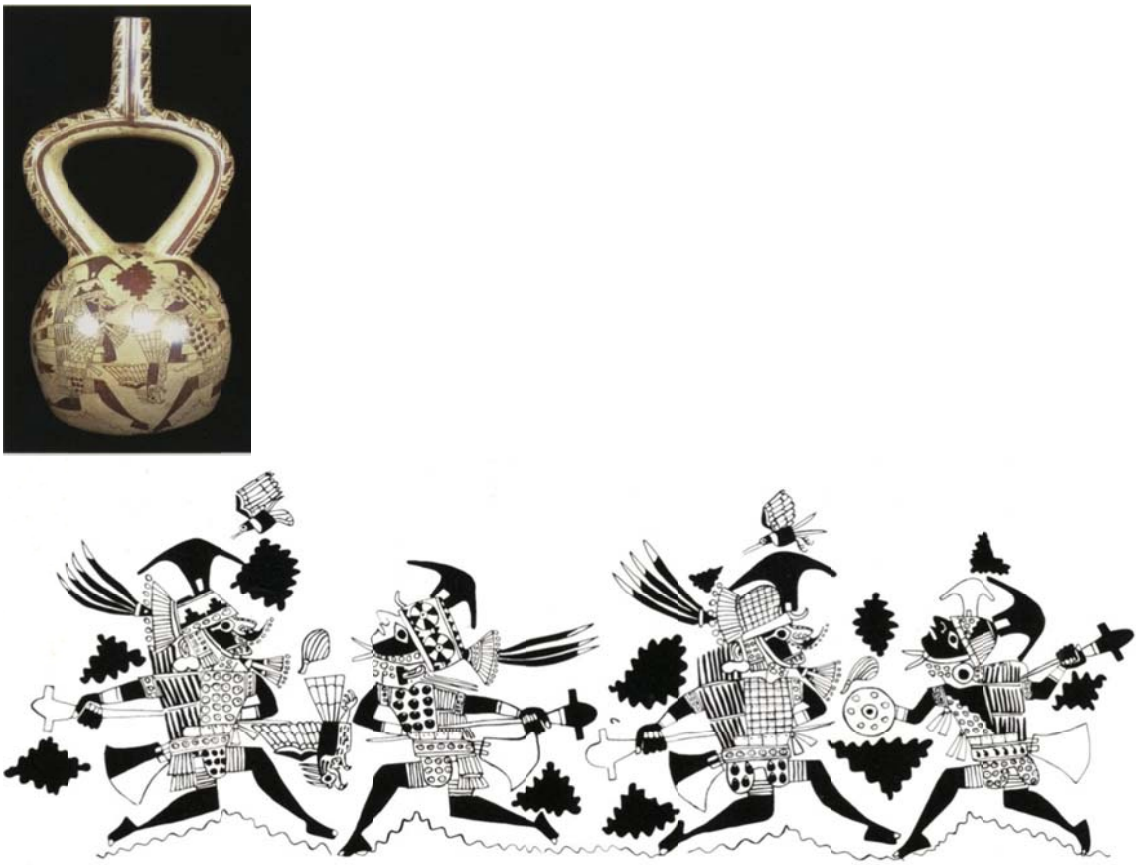


Figure 23.Human warriors with hummingbirds.Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

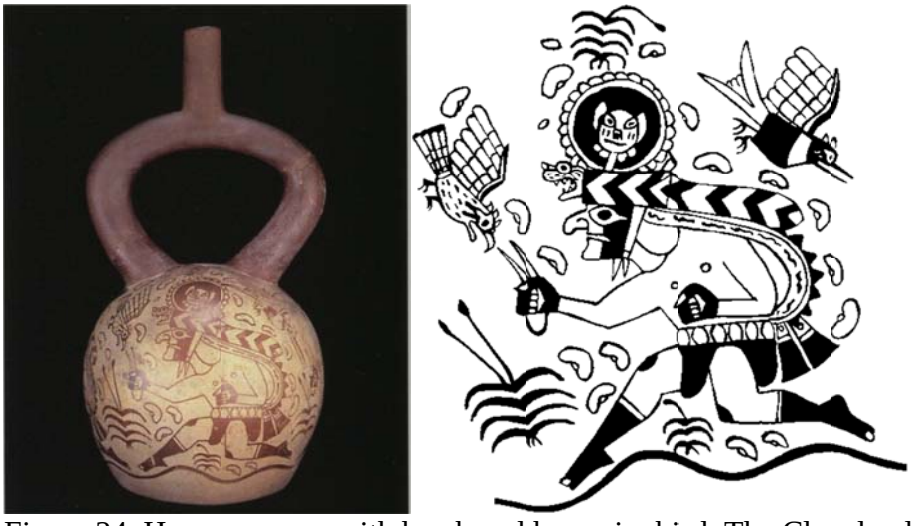


Figure 24. Human runner with hawk and hummingbird. The Cleveland Museum of Art (1947.172). Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 25.Hawk and hummingbird runners.MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML002374). Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 26.Centipede, hummingbird and hawk runners.MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML002358).

Figure 27.Hummingbird and hawk warriors.MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML003988).

Figure 28.Osprey with bowl.Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 29.Human warriors with hummingbirds and hawks.Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

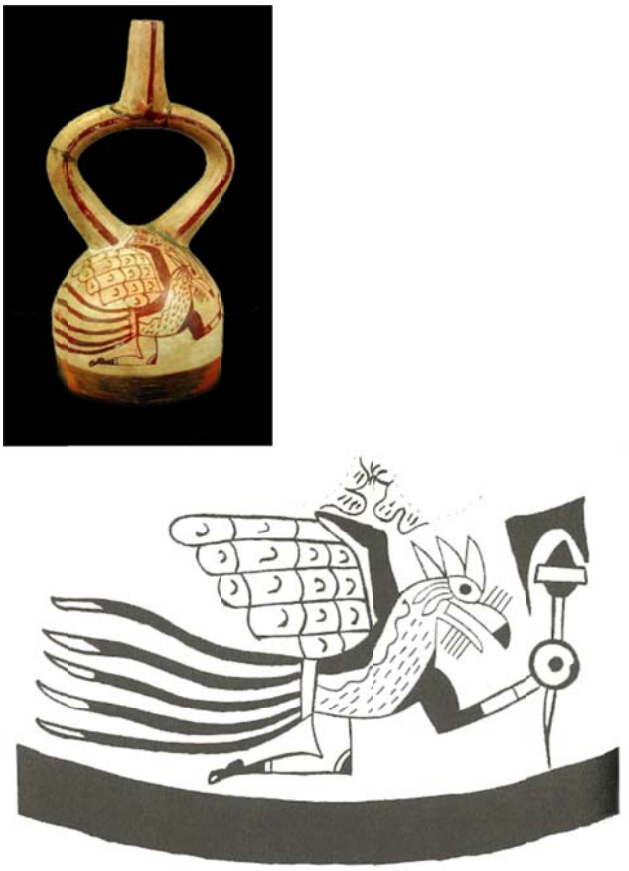


Figure 30. Hawk warrior. Peabody Museum, Cambridge, Mass. Image from Kutscher 1983, Figure 177.

Figure 31.Bean and Stick Ceremony.MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML013623).

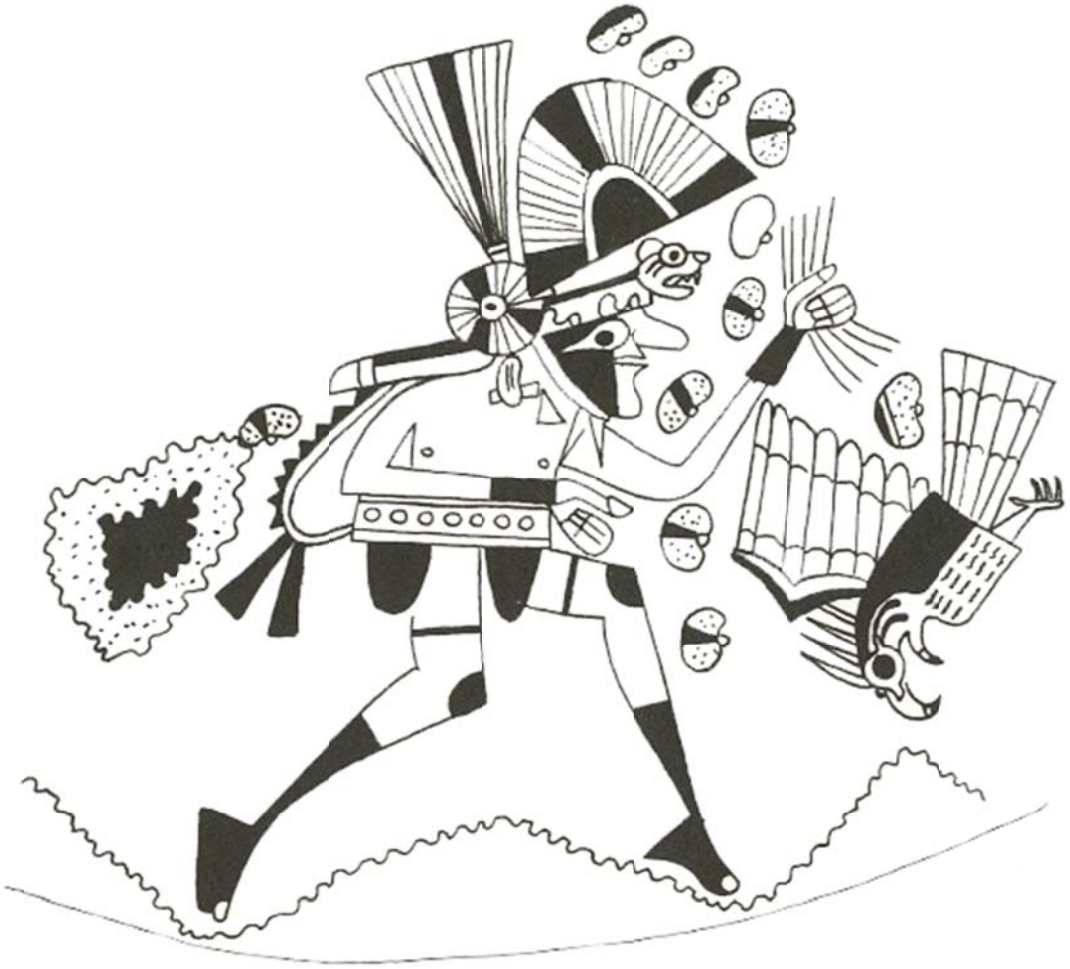


Figure 32.Hawk and human figure with beans and sticks.Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin. Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 139.

Figure 33. Ceremonial Badmintonscene. MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML004109). Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 34. Bird hunting.MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML013613). Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 35.Ear spool with owl head necklace.Tomb One, Sipan archaeological site.

Figure 36.Sculpture of anthropomorphized crab.Tomb Three, Sipan archaeological site.Original excavation and reconstructed image from Bruning Museum.

Figure 37a. Reconstruction of Tomb Two at Sipan archaeological site.

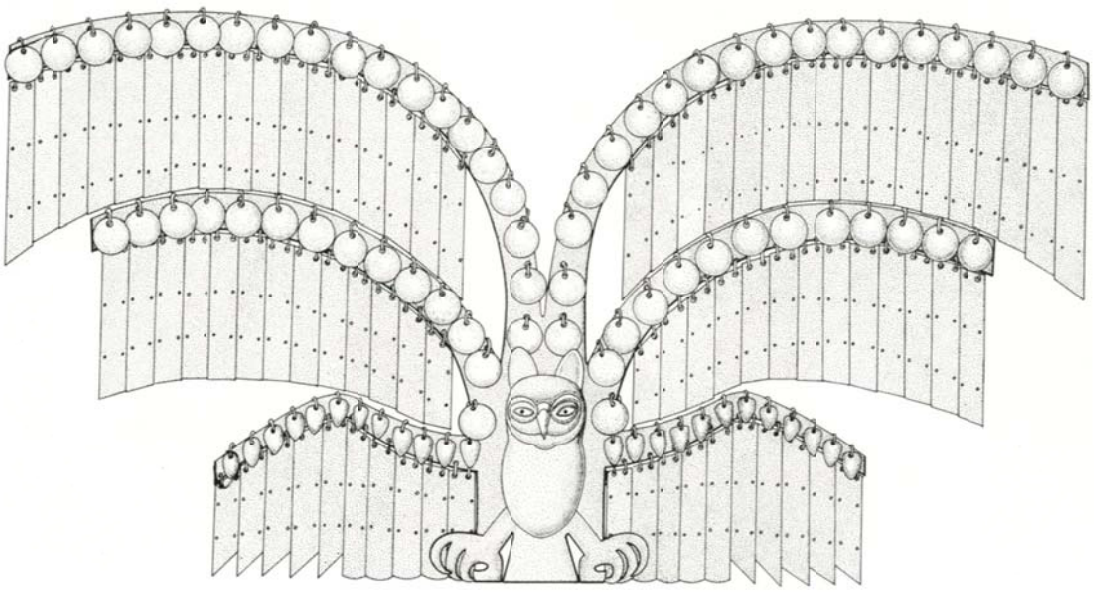


Figure 37b.Owl headdress reconstruction from Tomb Two at Sipan archaeological site.

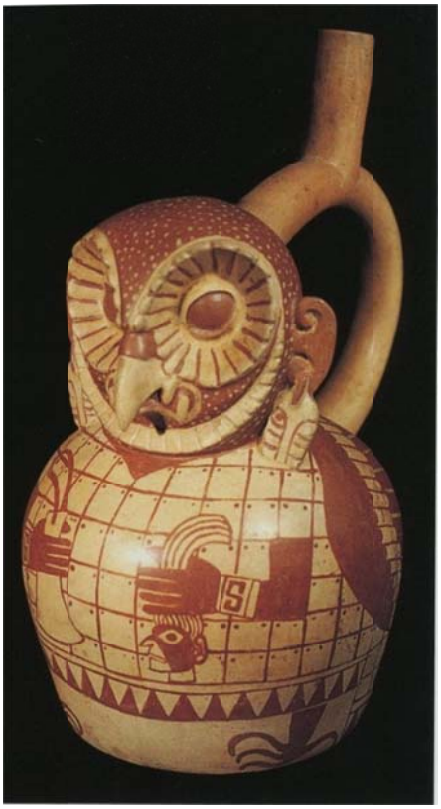


Figure 38.Owl Decapitator.Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA. Photograph by Christopher Donnan.

Figure 39.Human warriors with birds.Museo Regional Arqueológico Enrique Bruning de Lambayeque. Drawing by Donna McClelland.

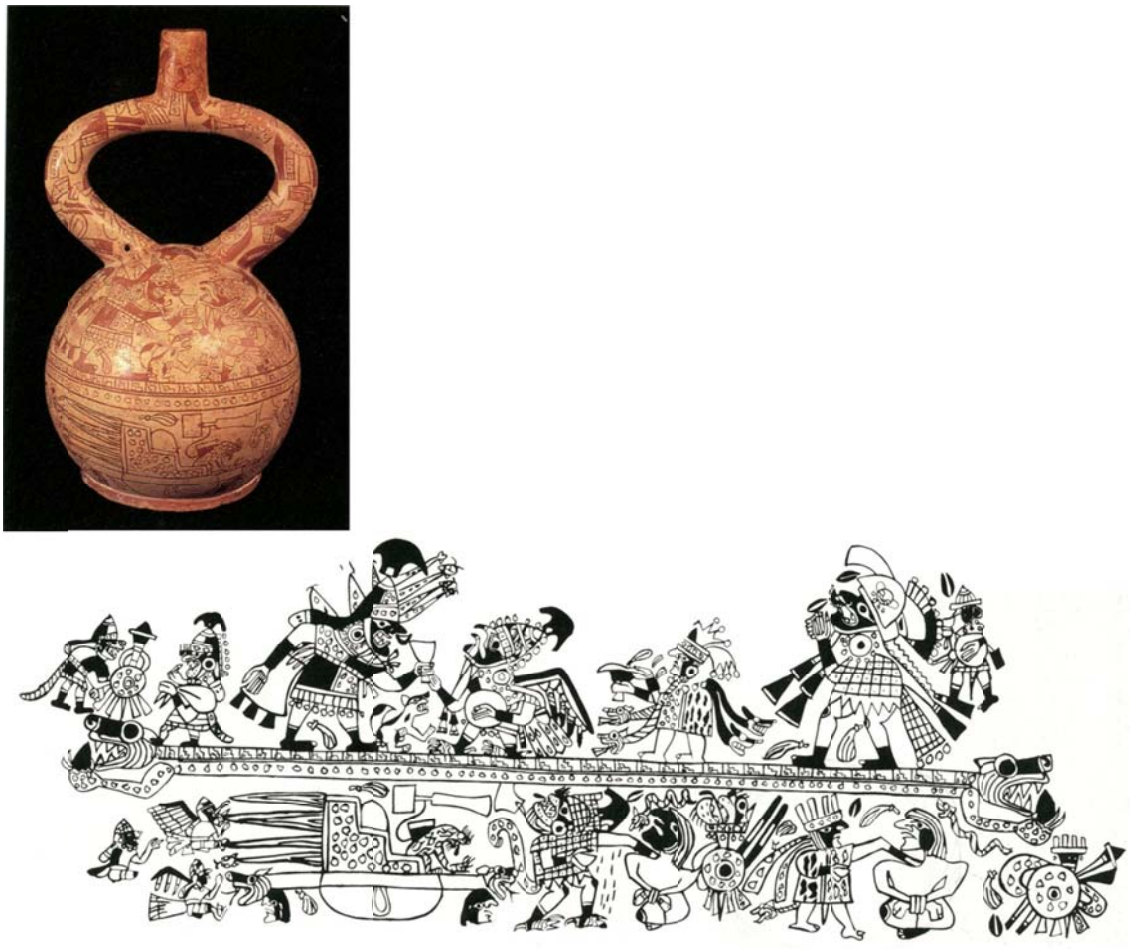


Figure 40.The Sacrifice Ceremony.Staatliches Museum fürVölkerkunde, Munich.Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

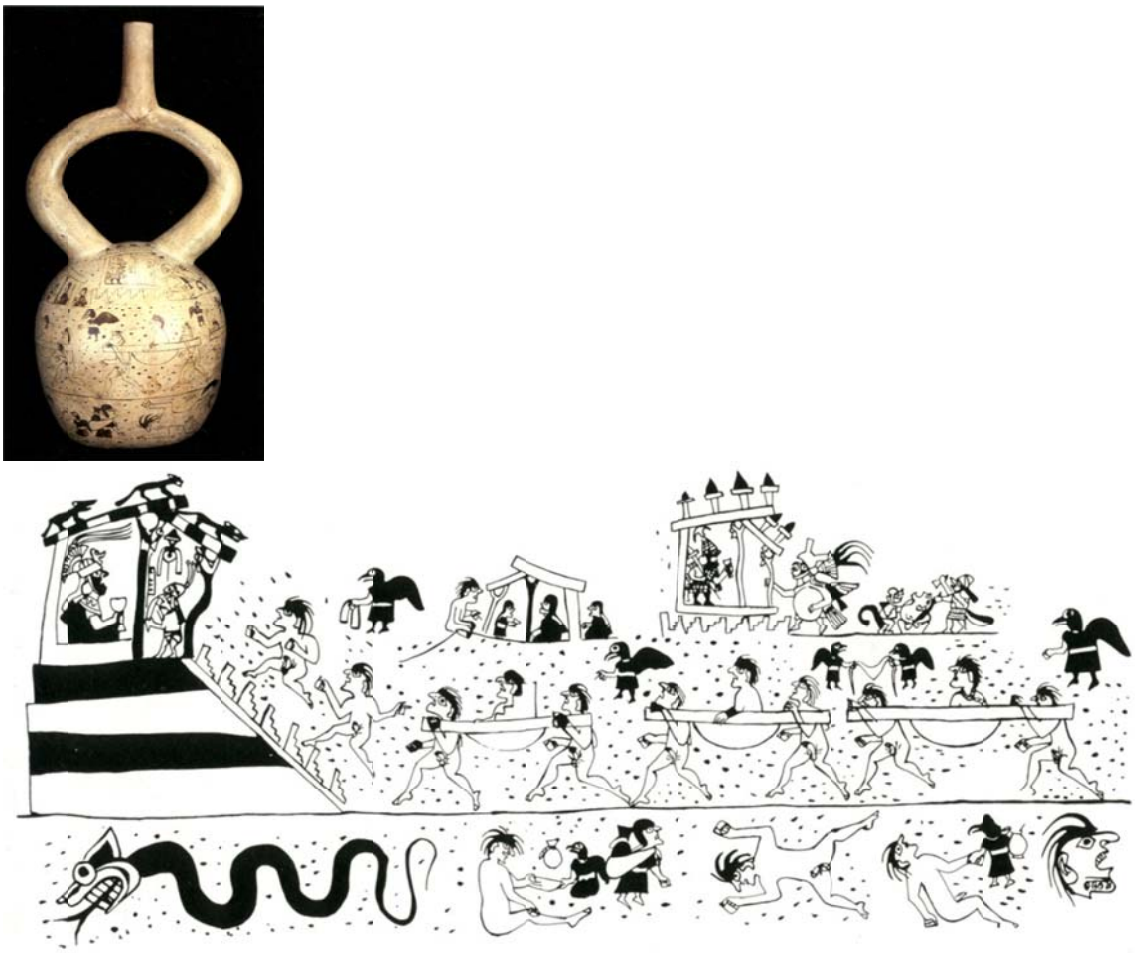


Figure 41.Scene with prisoners and sacrifice ceremony.American Museum of Natural History, New York. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 41a. Detail of sacrifice ceremony.

Figure 41b. Detail of bird figures.

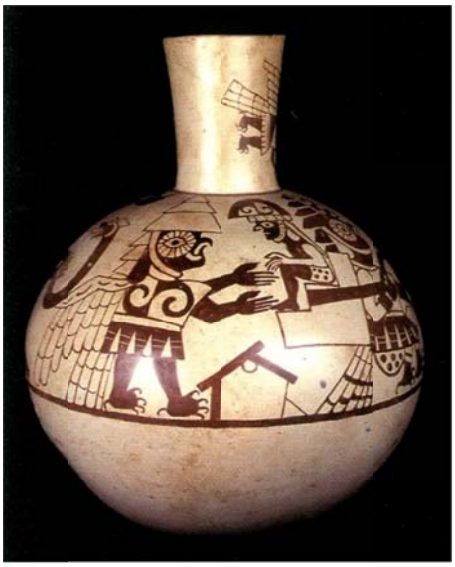


Figure 42.Scene with anthropomorphic owls and seated humans.Linden-Museum, Stuttgart. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

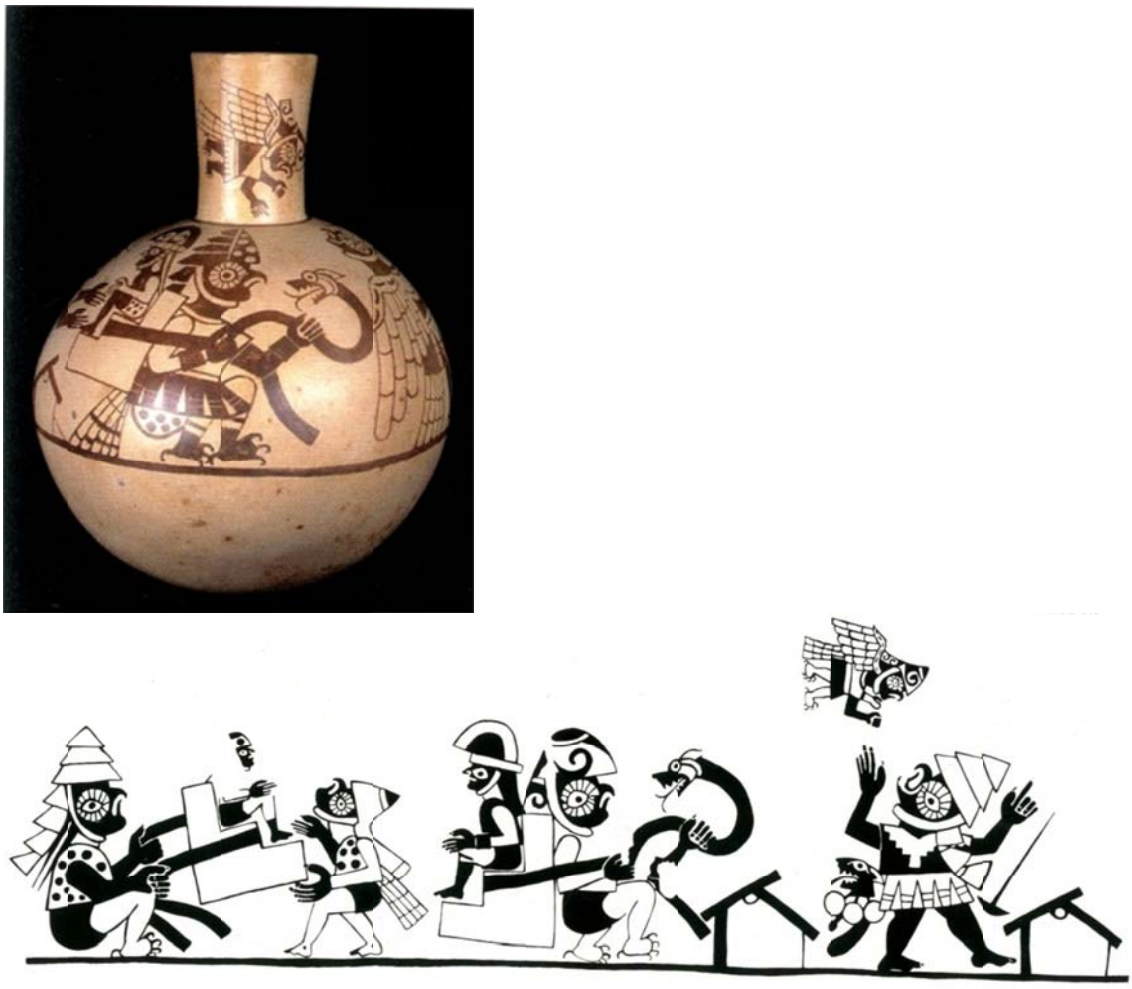


Figure 43.Scene with anthropomorphic owls and seated humans.Linden-Museum, Stuttgart. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

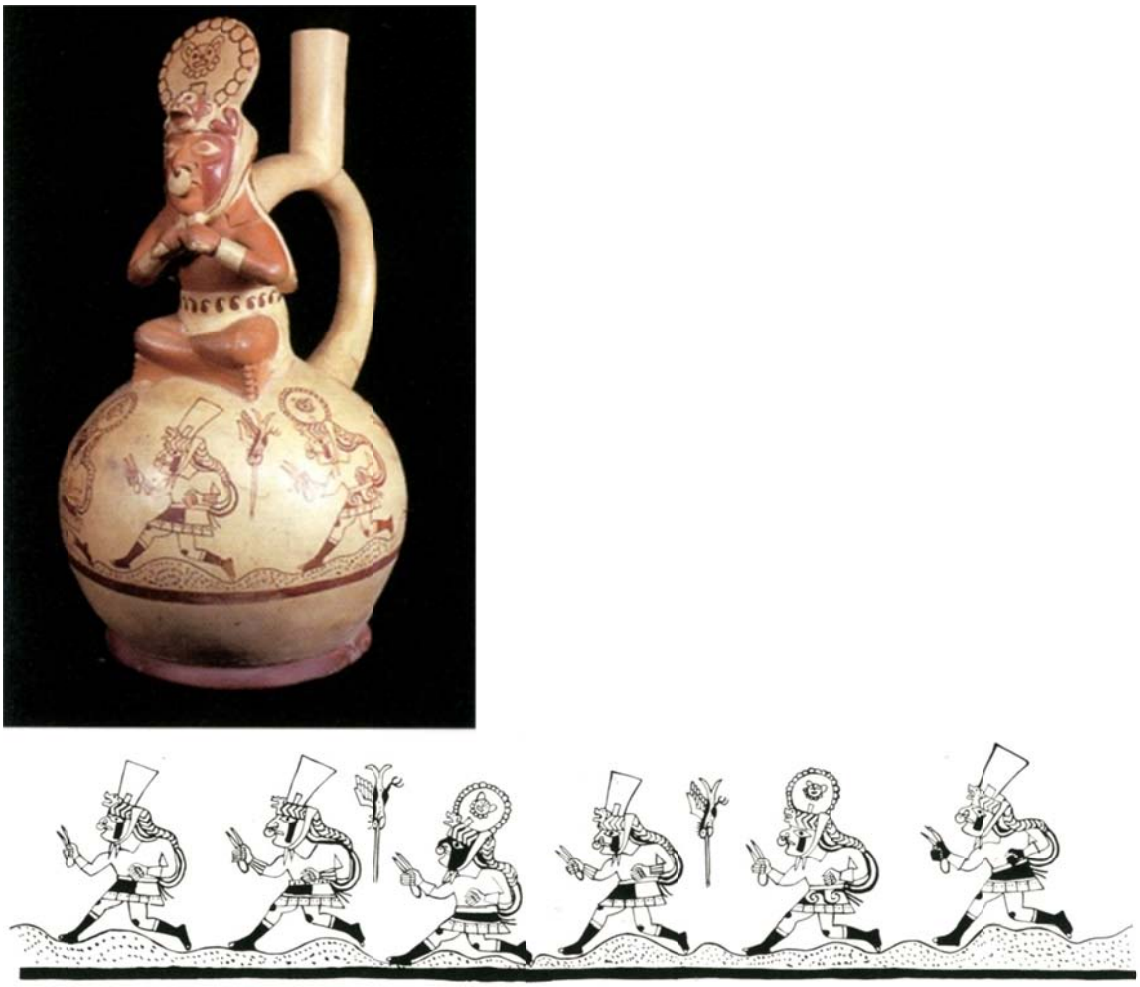


Figure 44.Human runners and hummingbirds.The Art Institute of Chicago. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

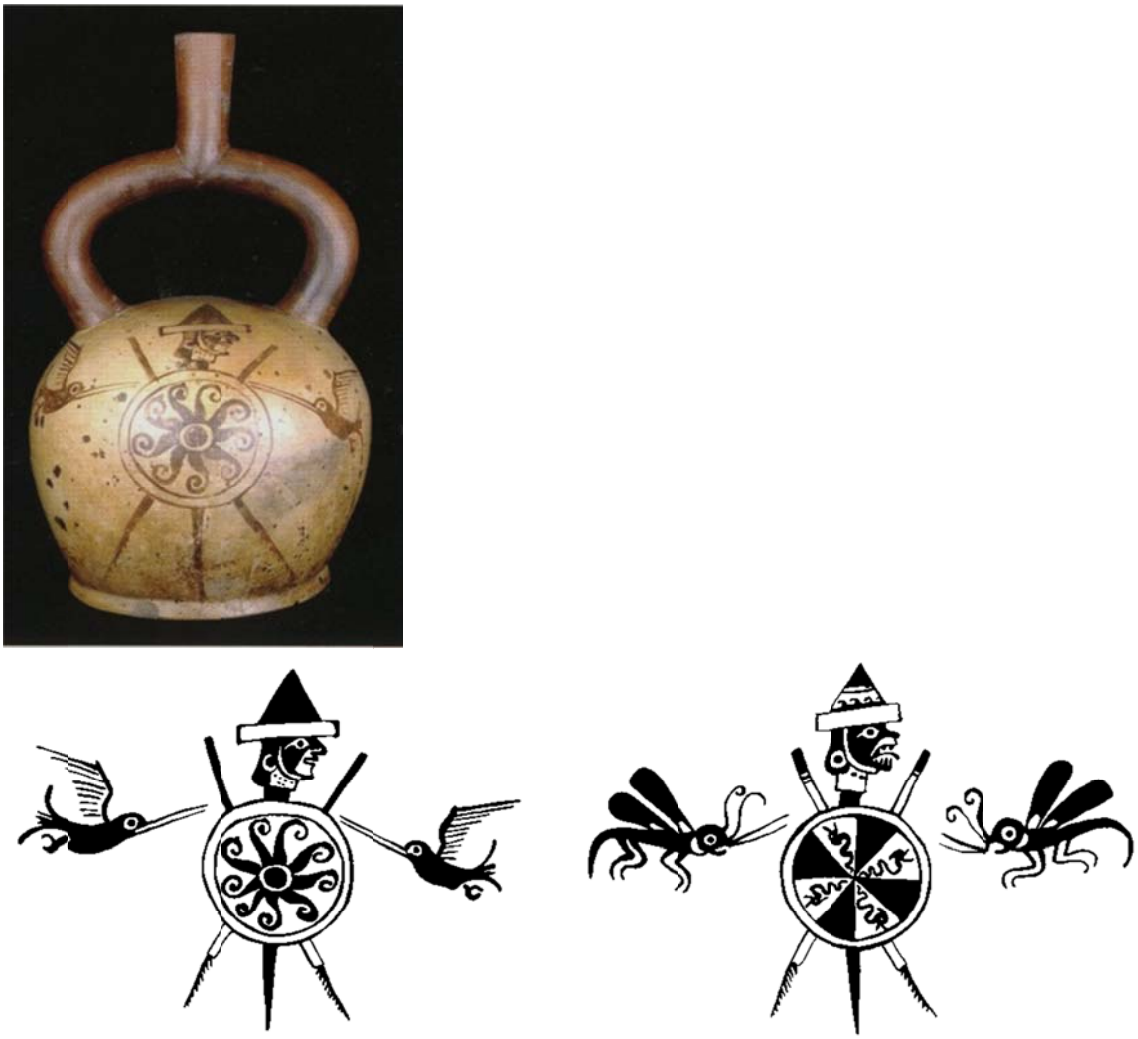


Figure 45.Weapon bundles with hummingbirds and dragonflies.Museo Amano, Lima. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

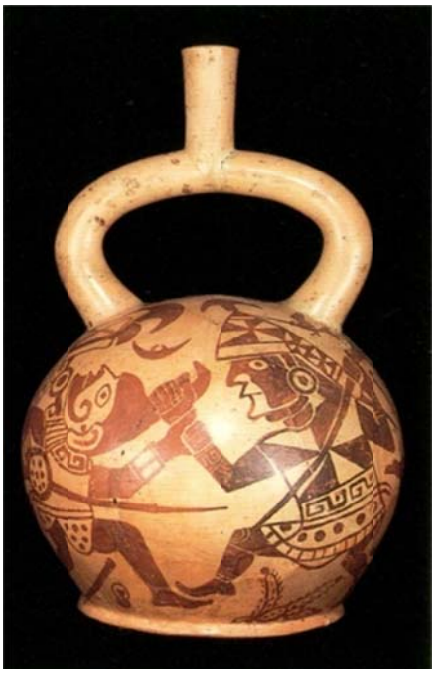
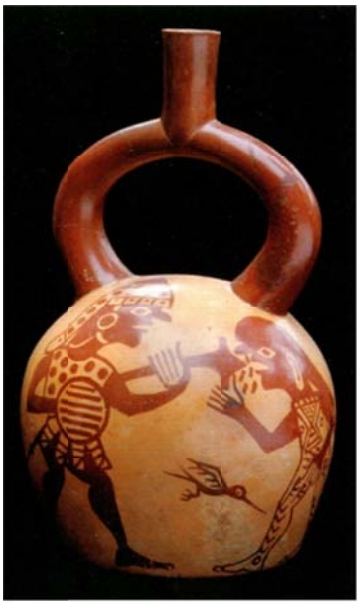


Figure 46.Human warfare with hummingbirds.MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML010851). Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 47. Wrinkle Face grabbing Split Top by the hair, with Iguana at the right. Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.



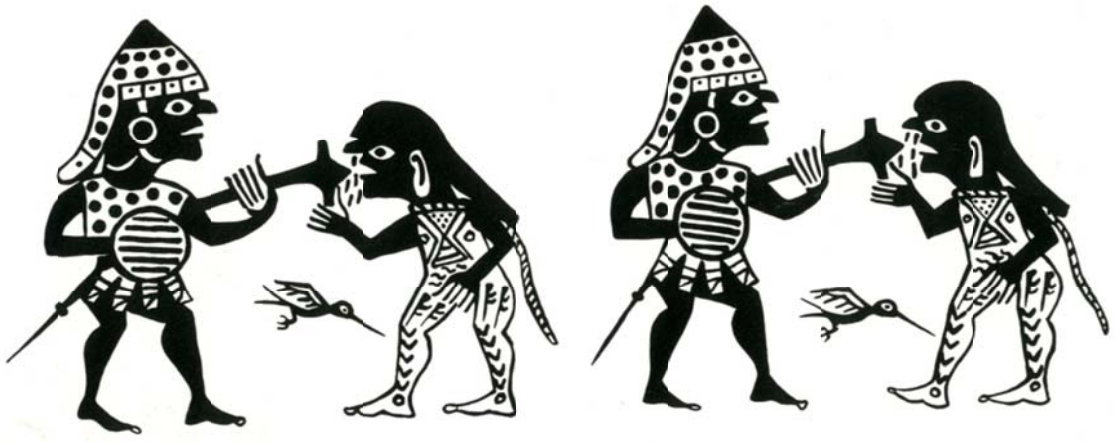


Figure 48.Warriors and bleeding prisoners with hummingbirds.Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

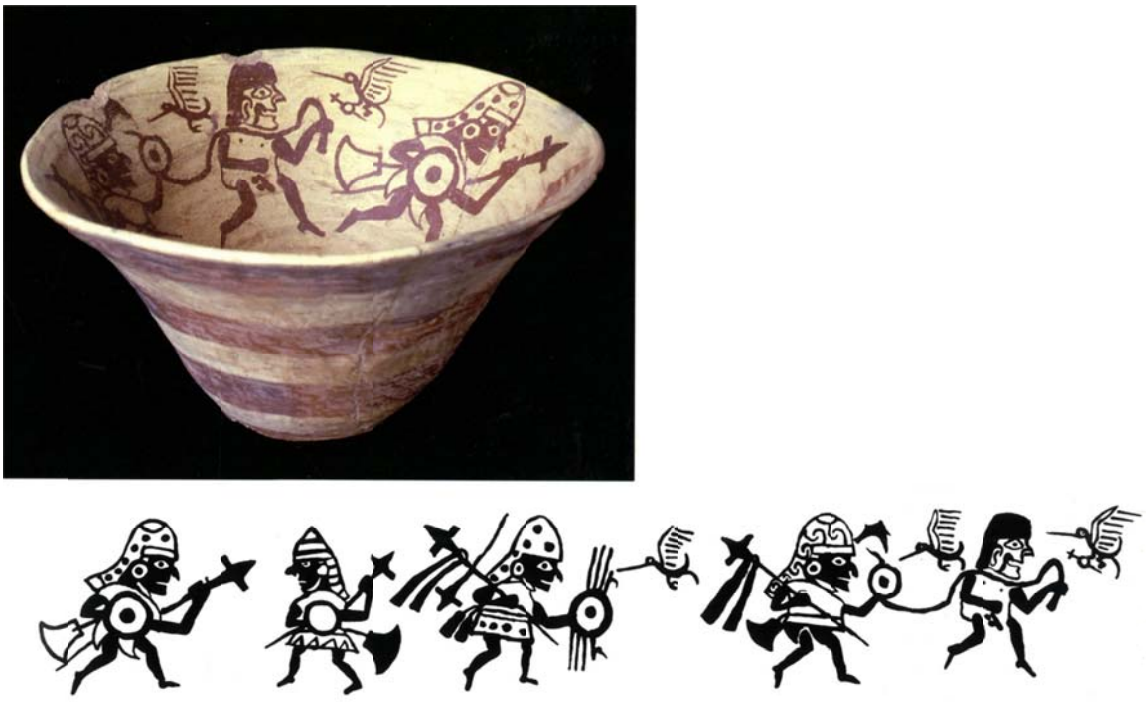


Figure 49. Human warriors and prisoners with hummingbirds.MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML001809). Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

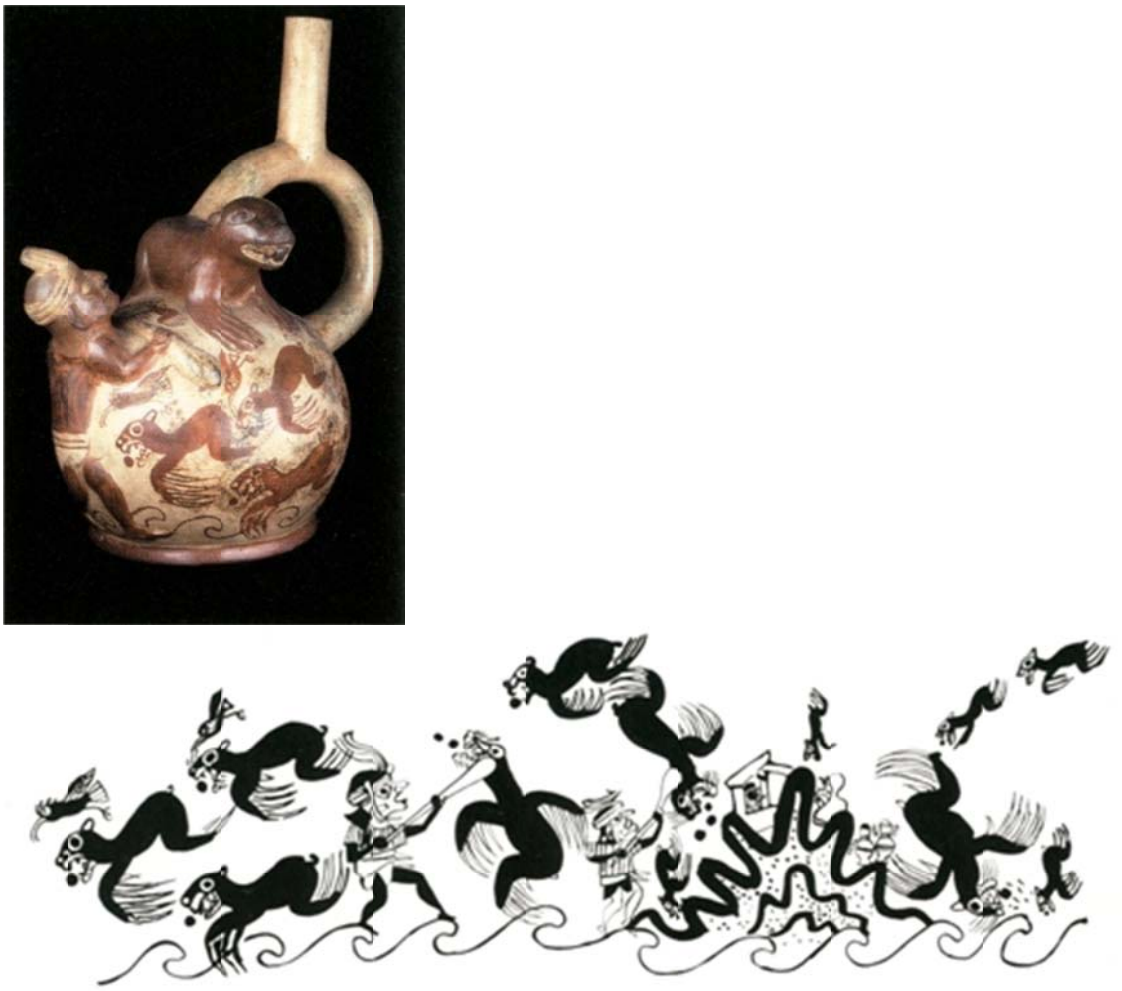


Figure 50.Sea lion hunting with hummingbirds.Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

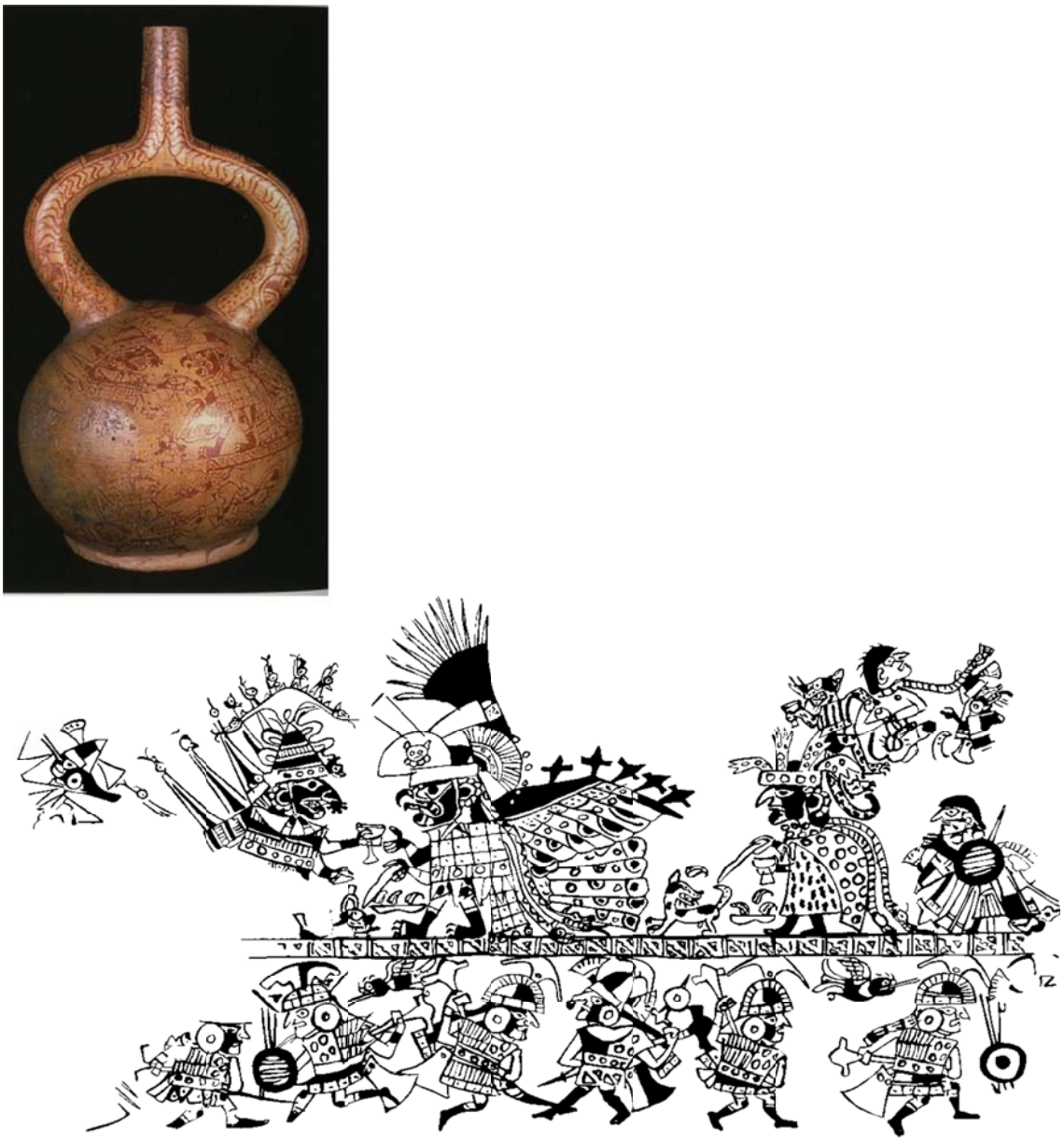


Figure 51. Sacrificeceremony. Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

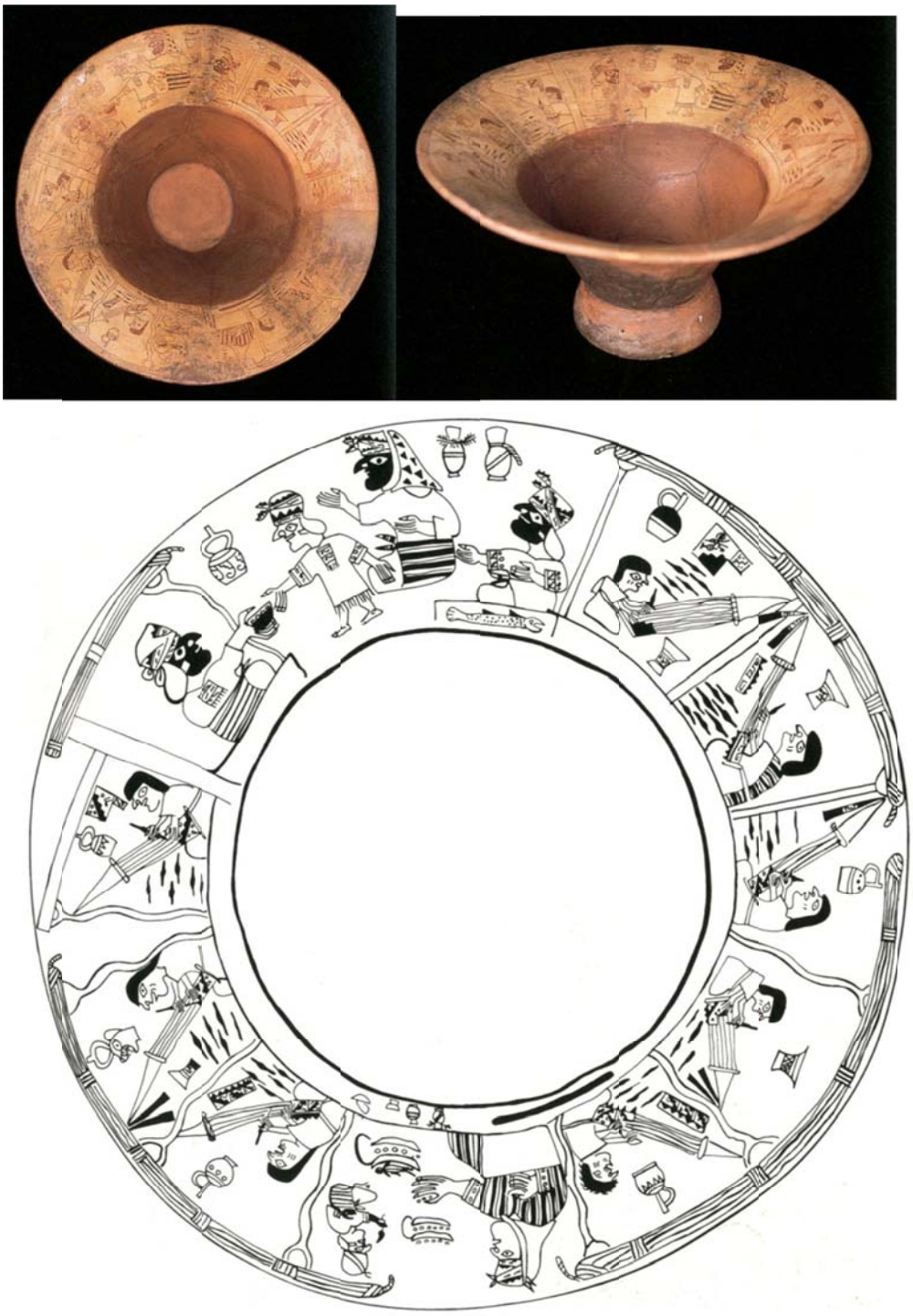


Figure 52.Weaving scene.British Museum, London. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 52a. Detail of textile with hummingbird design.

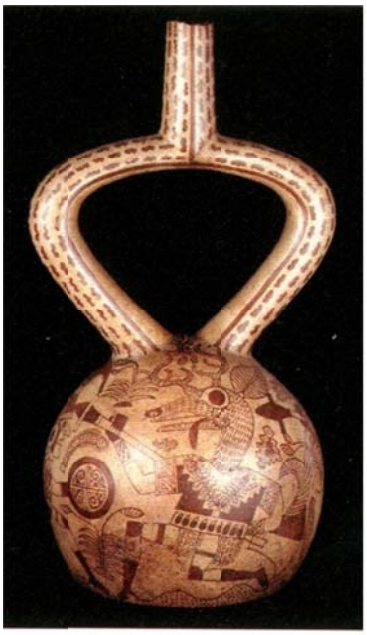


Figure 53. Combat between anthropomorphized beans and deer. Private collection.Drawing by Donna McClelland.

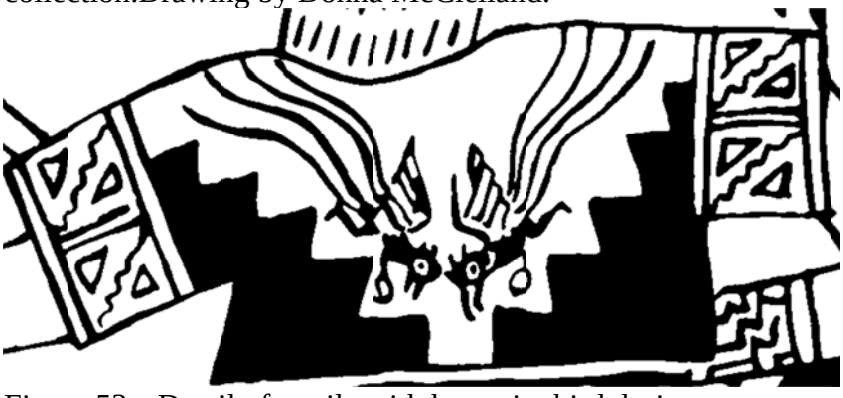
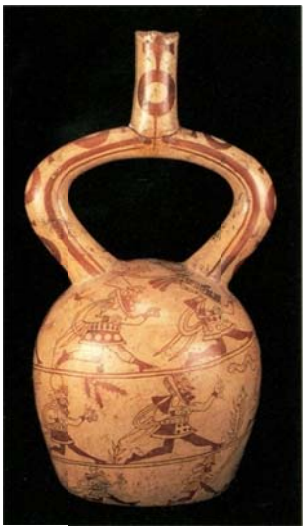


Figure 53a. Detail of textile with hummingbird design.

Figure 54.Hummingbird warrior.British Museum, London.Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 189.

Figure 55. Hummingbird, monkey, hawk and iguana warriors. Linden-Museum, Stuttgart. Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 174.

Figure 56. Hummingbird runner. The Art Institute of Chicago. Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 285.



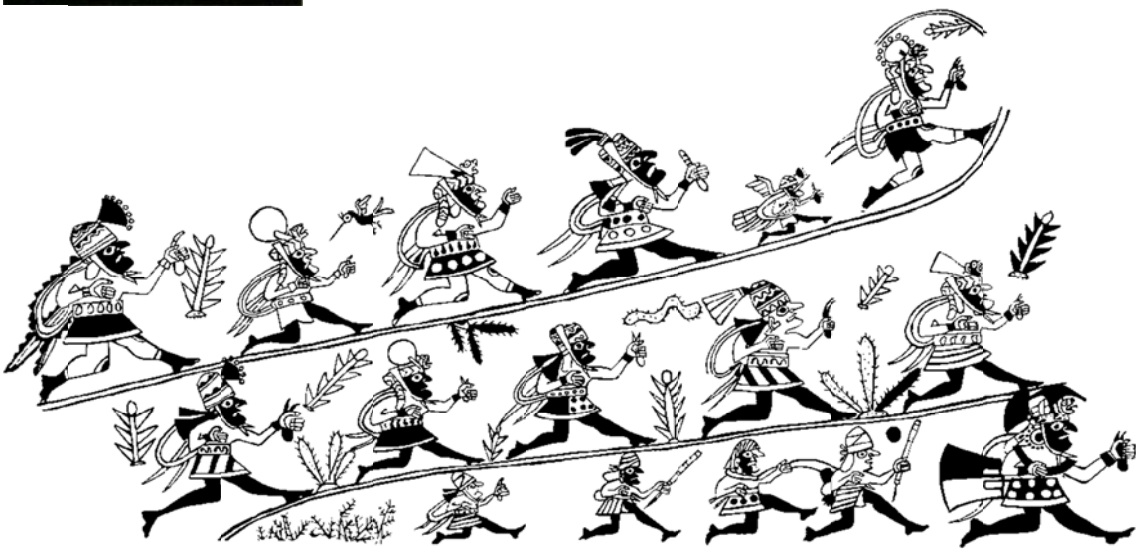


Figure 57. Human and hummingbird runners. Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 57a. Detail.

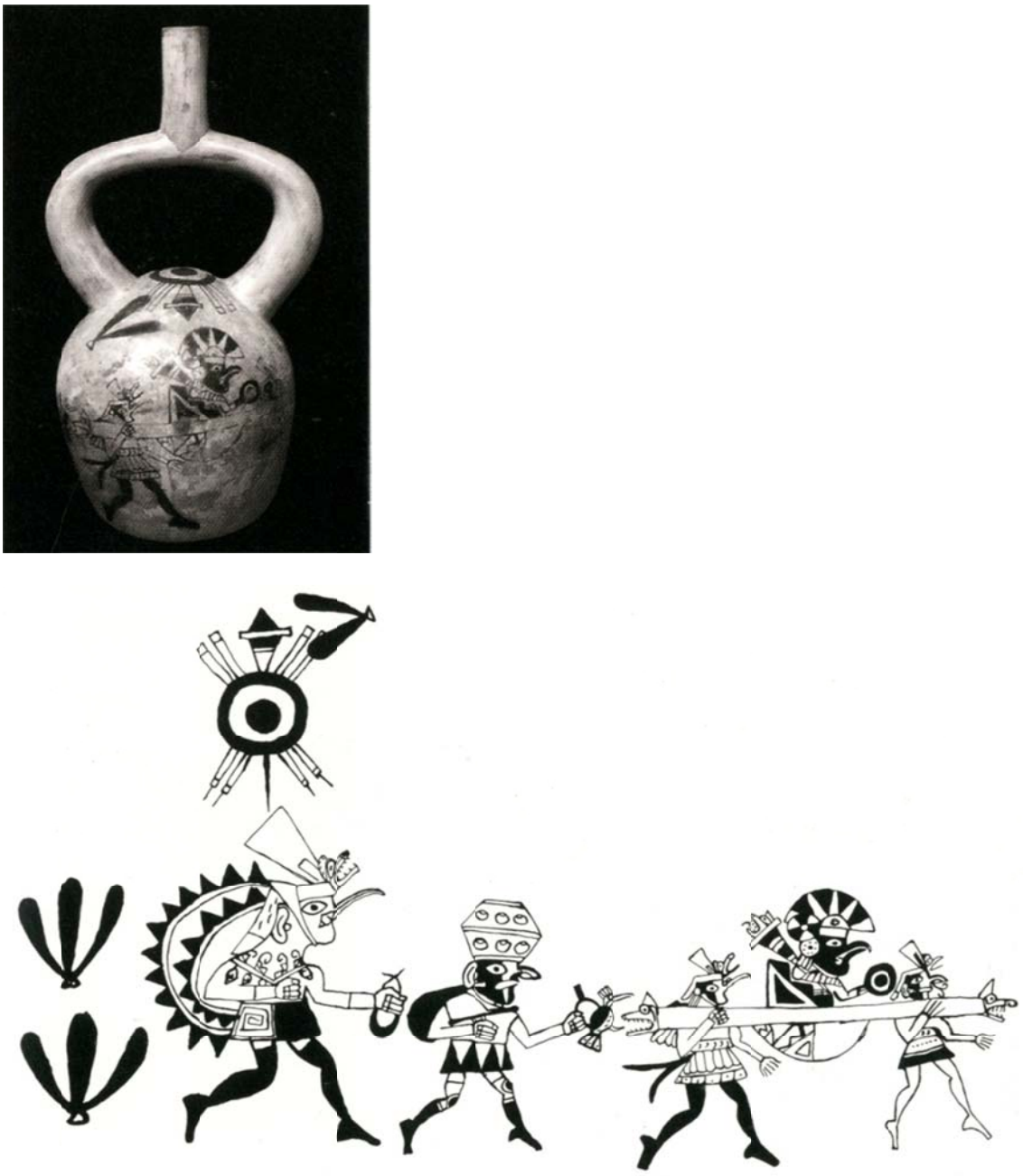


Figure 58. Litter scene. Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

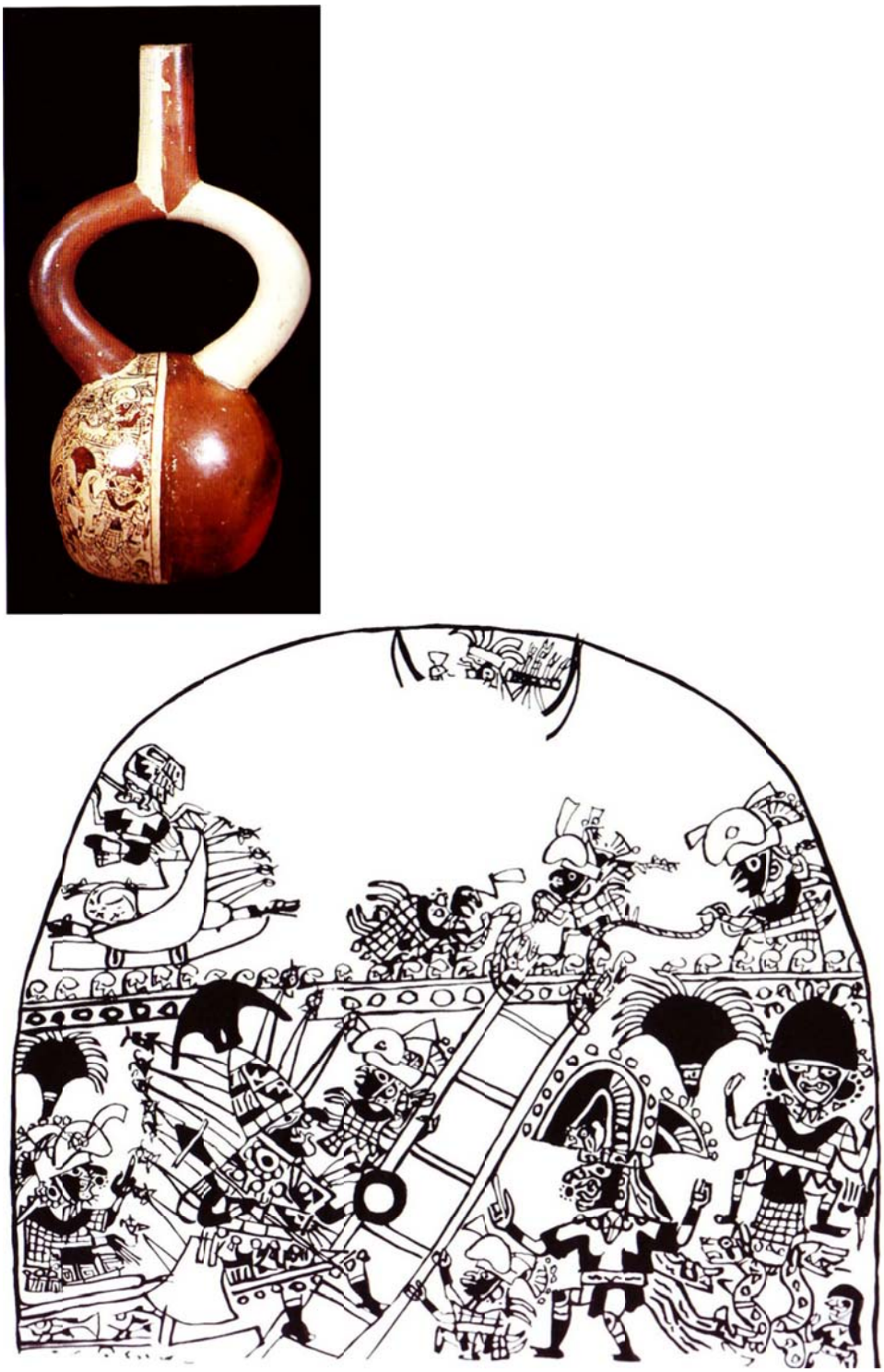


Figure 59. Sacrifice Ceremony. Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

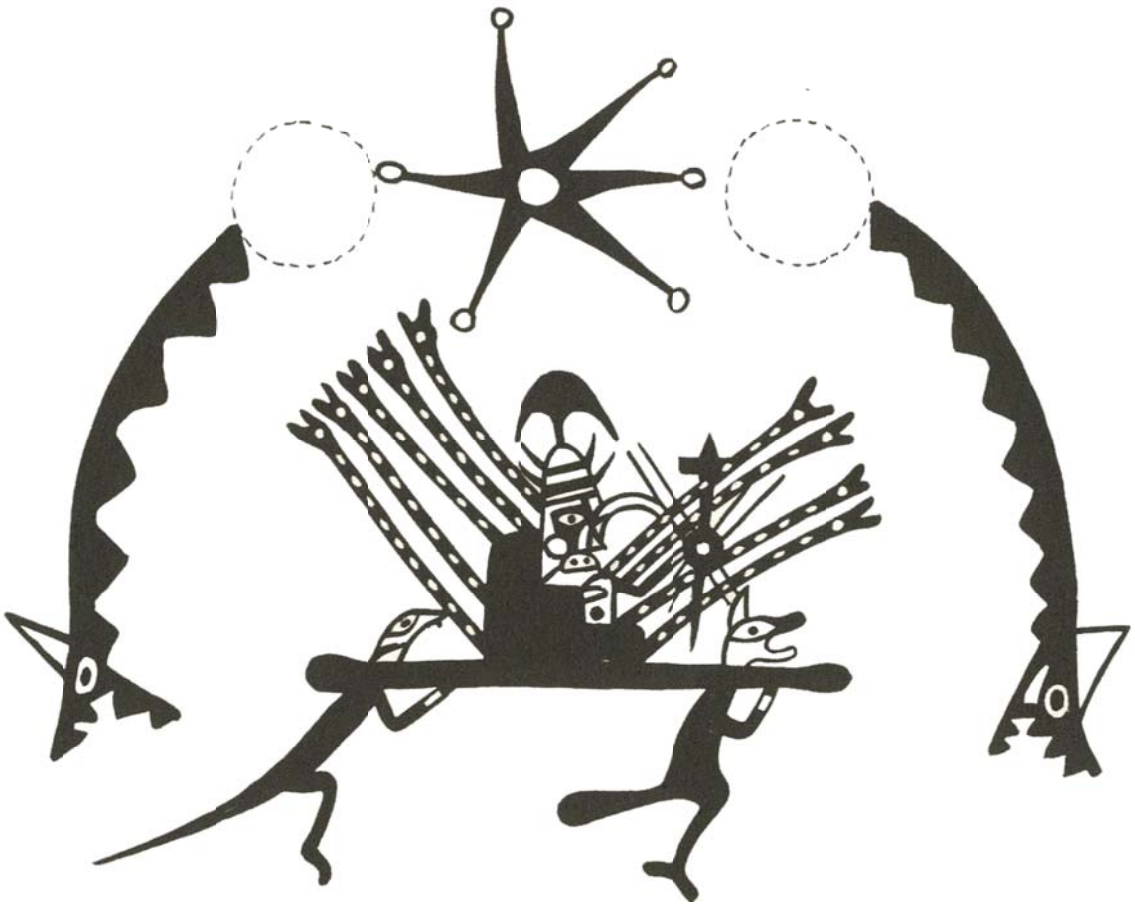


Figure 60. Litter scene. Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin.

Figure 61. Scene with standards and sea birds. Banco Central de la Reserva, Lima.Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 62.Carrion feasting on a victim.Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich. Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 121.

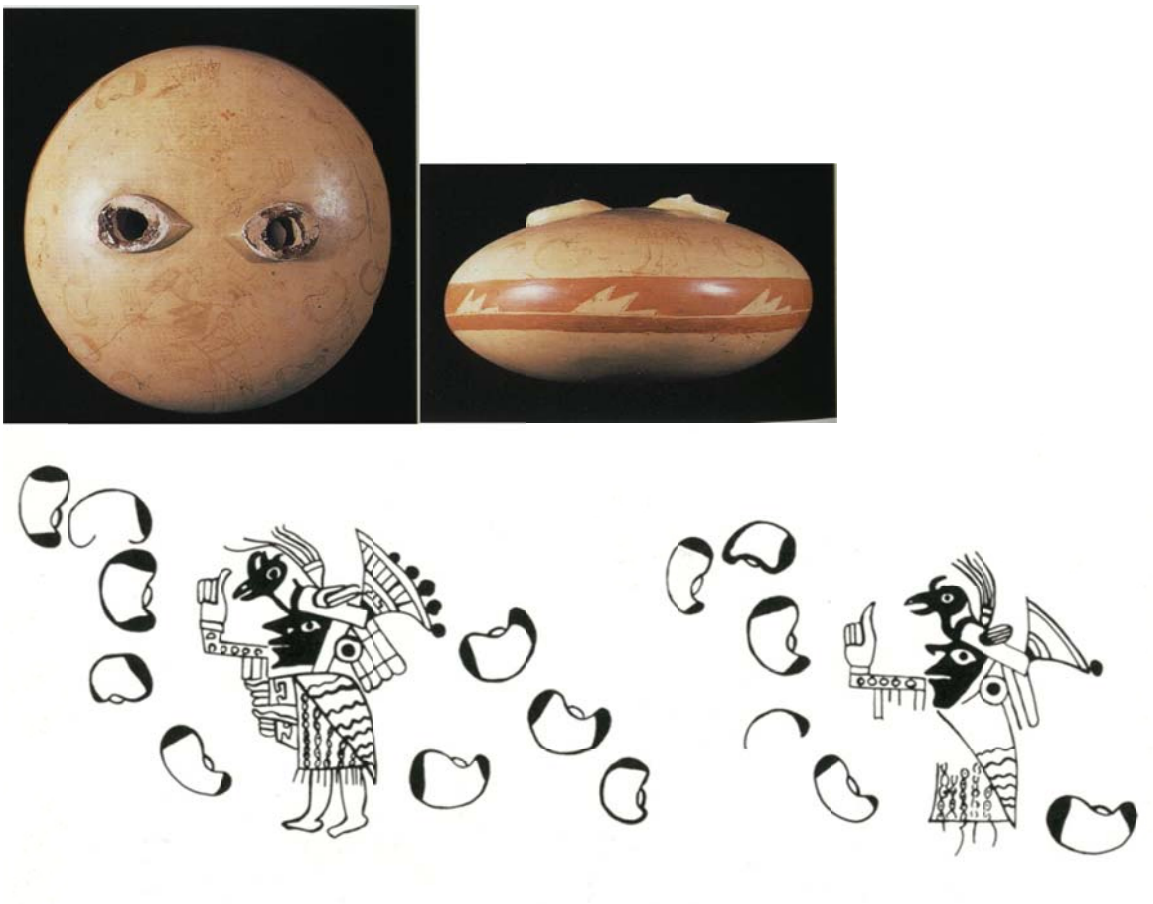


Figure 63.Musicians wearing condor headdresses.Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 64. Vulturewarrior. MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú **(**ML004051).

Figure 65. Vulture warrior. Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg. Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 184.

Figure 66.Sea birds, rays and fish surrounding Wrinkle Face.Museo de Arqueología de la Universidad de Trujillo. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 67. Wrinkle Face or anthropomorphized clam shell with sea bird. Museo de América, Madrid. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

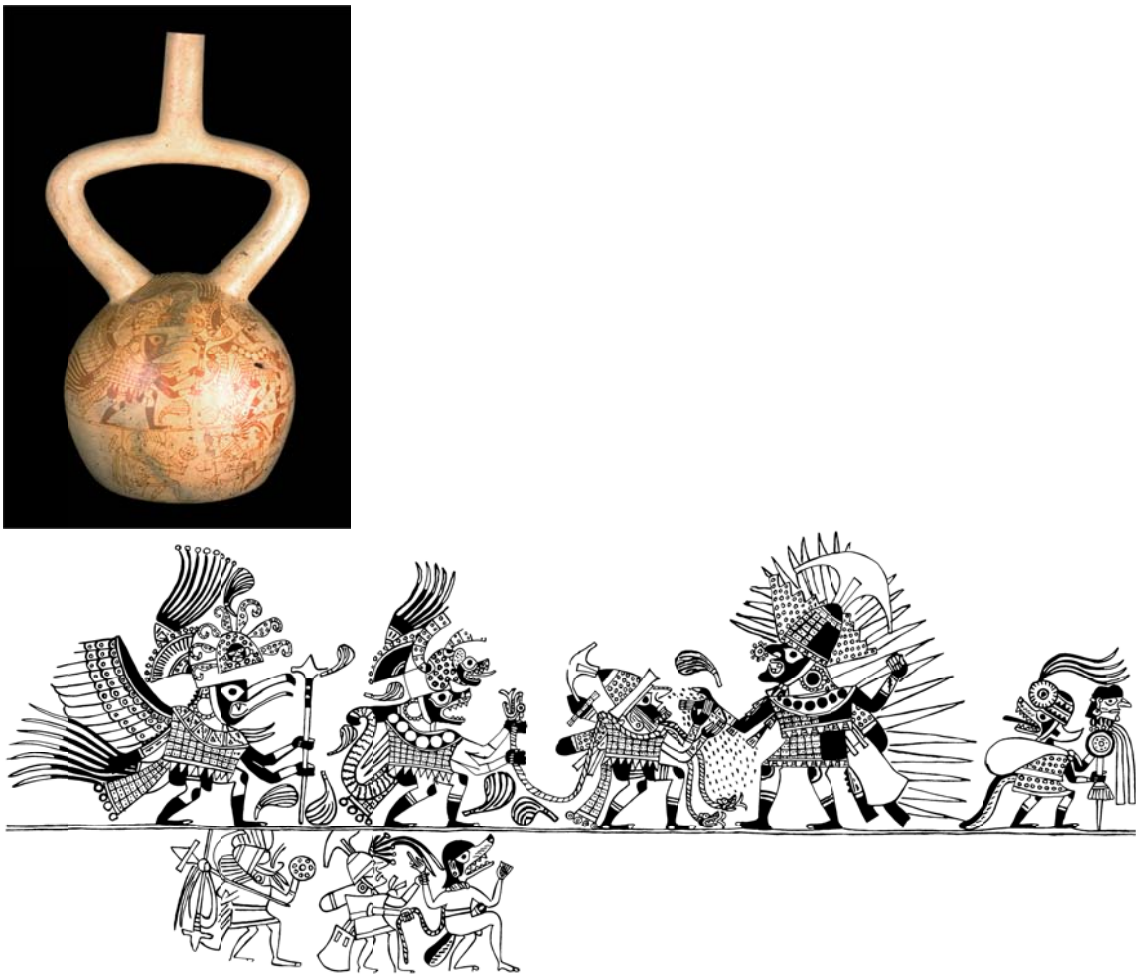


Figure 68. Sacrifice Ceremony. Völkerkundliche Sammlungen der Stadt Mannheim im Reiss-Museum, Mannheim. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

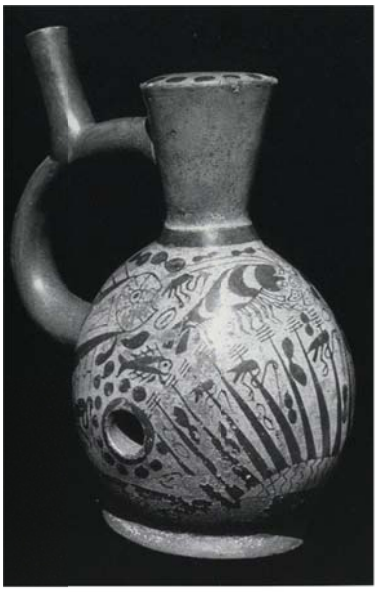


Figure 69.Marsh scene.Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 70. SacrificeCeremony. MuseoLarco, Lima-Perú (ML003941).

Figure 71. Warfarescene. Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima. Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 193.

Figure 72.Seated figures with parrots.Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California, Berkeley. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

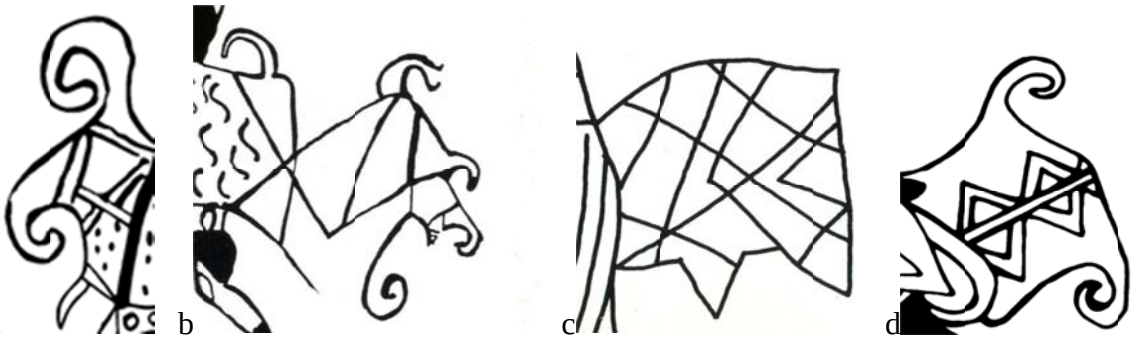

a b c d

Figure 73. Bat Wings.

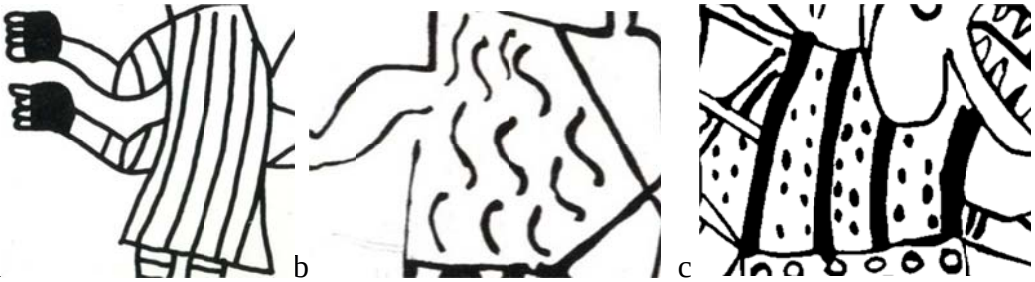

a b c

Figure 74. Bat Torsos.

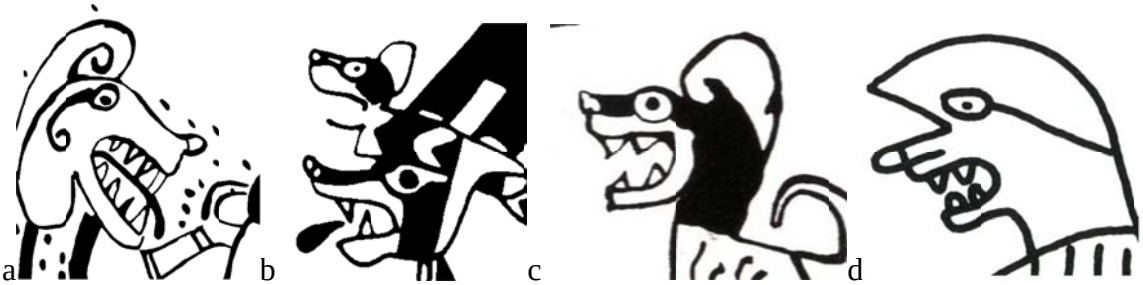

a b c d

Figure 75. Bat Heads.

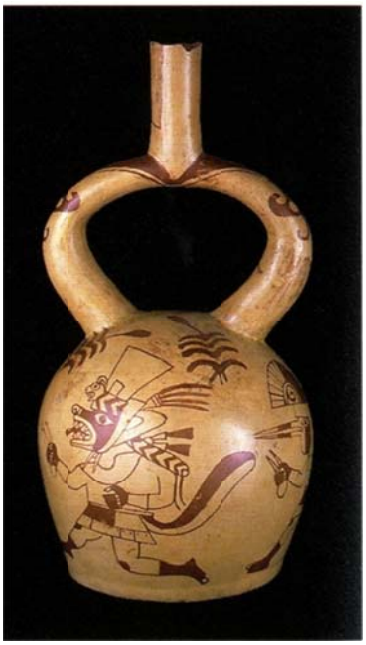


Figure 76.Snake, fox and hummingbird runners.Private Collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 77. SacrificeCeremony. Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 78. Sacrifice Ceremony. Drawing of fragment of now-destroyed Mural E from Pañamarca. Reconstruction drawing by Donna McClelland

Figure 79.Supernatural confrontation, anthropomorphized bats versus Split Top.MuseoNacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

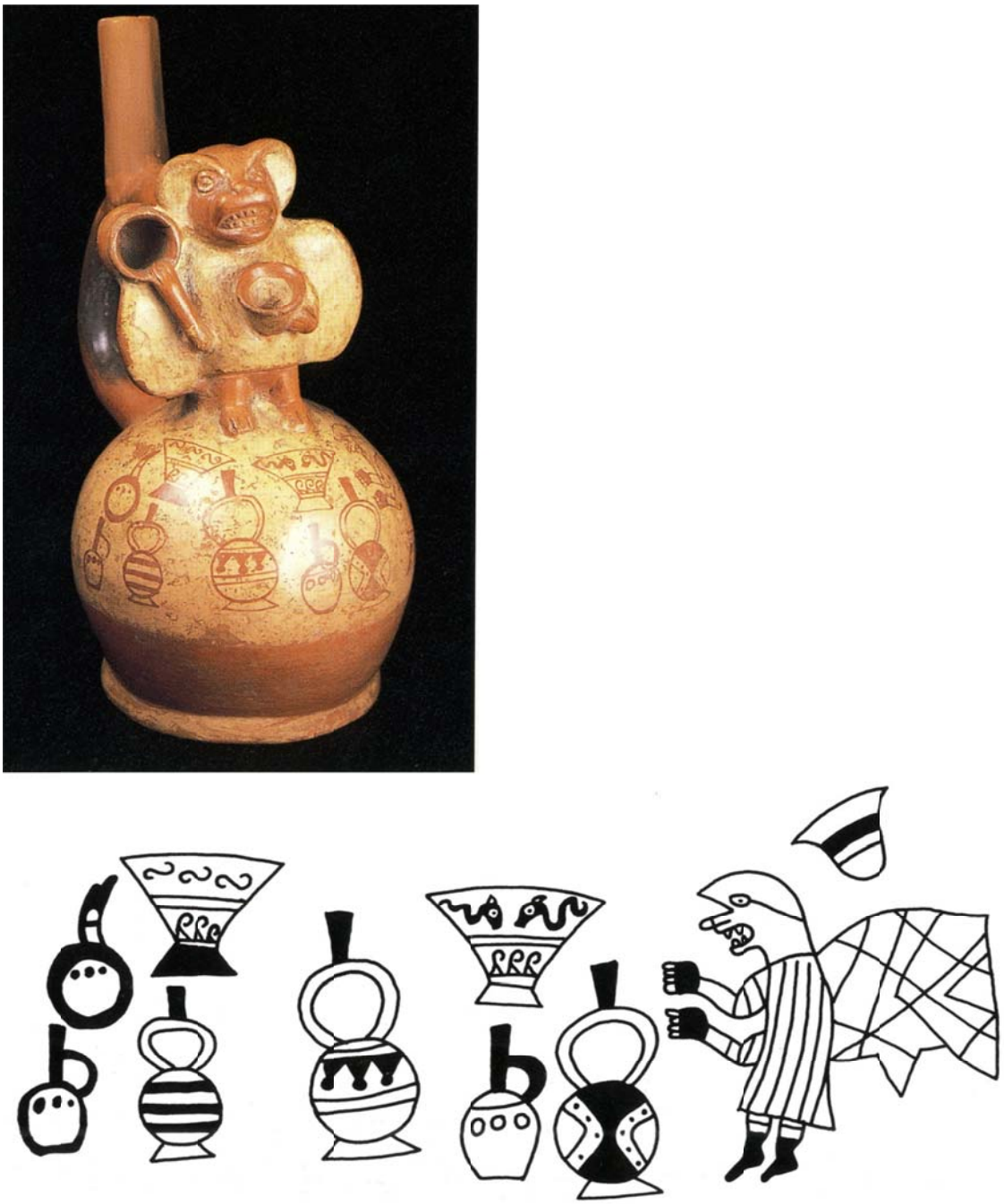


Figure 80. Bat and fineline painted vessels. Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

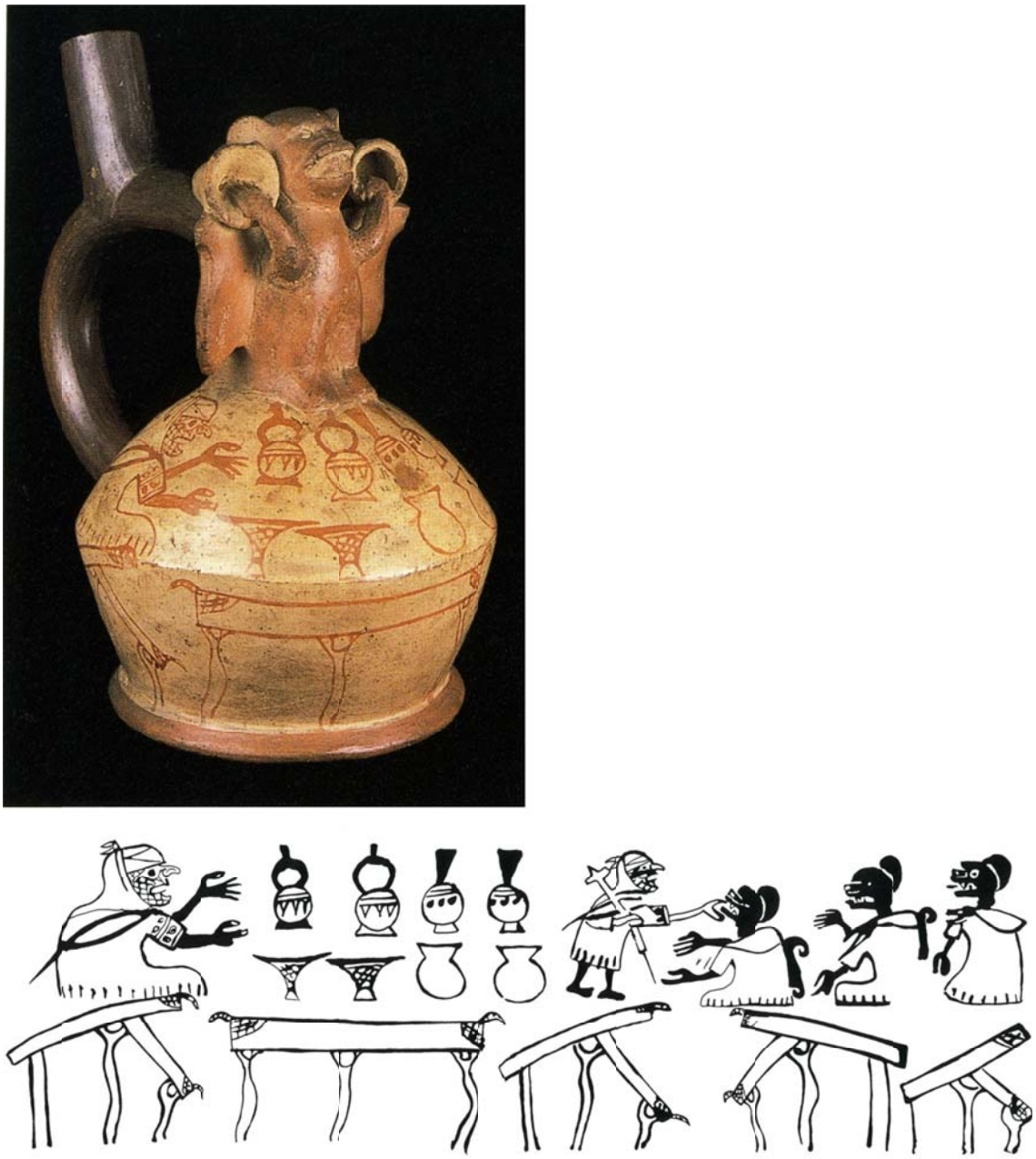


Figure 81.Scene with female figures, painted fineline vessels and anthropomorphic bats. Linden-Museum, Stuttgart. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 82. Seated figures with sticks. Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Figure 83. Anthropomorphic dragonfly and sea bird. Image from Golte 1994 Figure F46.

Figure 84. Anthropomorphic dragonfly and sea bird. Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin. Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 230.

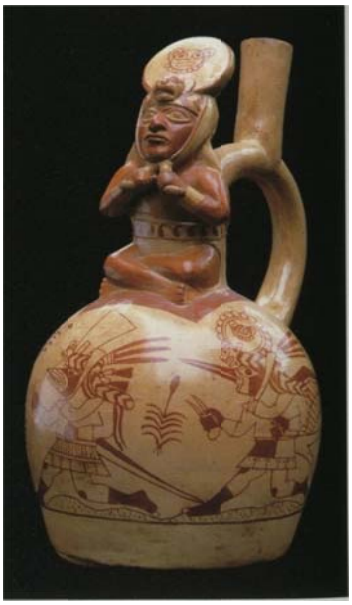


Figure 85. Dragonfly, iguana, hummingbird and fox runners. Private collection. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

Figure 86. Dragonfly, hummingbird, centipede and feline runners.The Art Institute of Chicago.Image from Kutscher 1983 Figure 298.

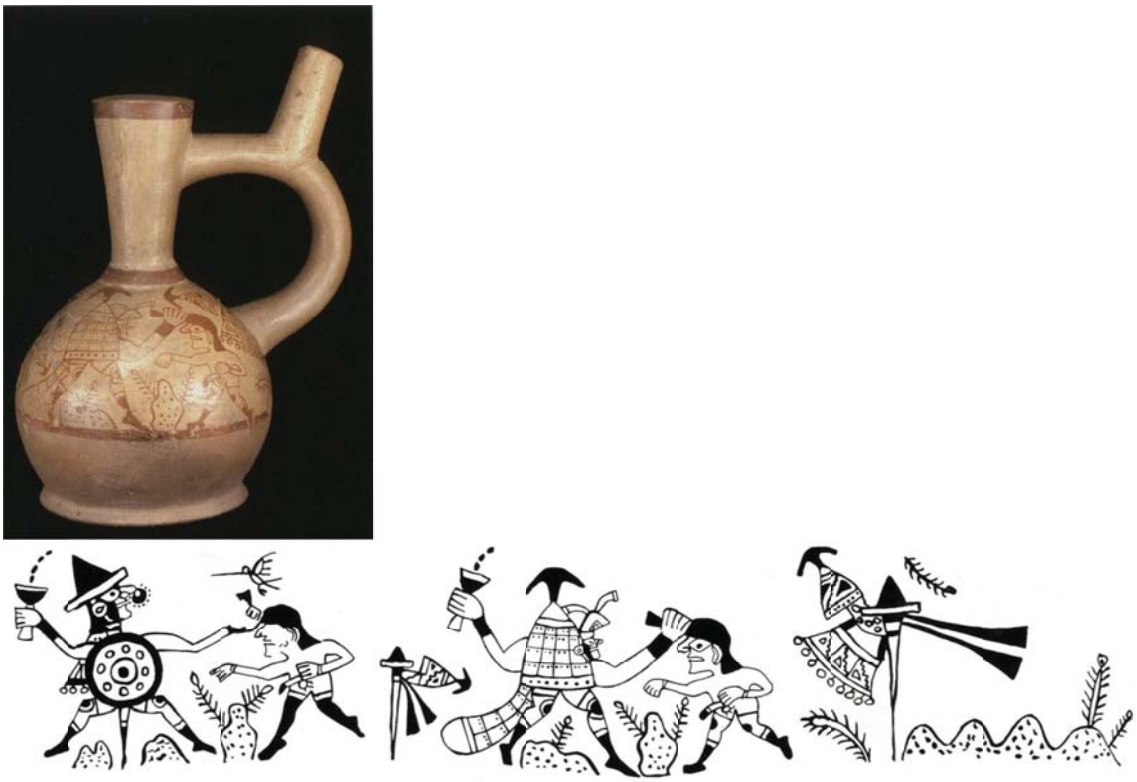


Figure 87. Animated weapons and helmets capture prisoners. The Art Institute of Chicago. Photograph by Christopher Donnan, drawing by Donna McClelland.

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